

CAPITALISM, CHAOS, AND CHRISTIAN HEALING: FAITH TABERNACLE CONGREGATION IN SOUTHERN COLONIAL GHANA, 1918–26

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ABSTRACT: In 1918, Faith Tabernacle Congregation was established in southern colonial Ghana. This Philadelphia-based church flourished in the context of colonialism, cocoa, and witchcraft, spreading rapidly after the 1918–19 influenza pandemic. In this context, several healing cults also proliferated, but Faith Tabernacle was particularly successful because the church offered its members spiritual, social, and legal advantages. The church's leadership was typically comprised of young Christian capitalist men, whose literacy and letter writing enabled the establishment of an American church without any missionaries present. By 1926, when Faith Tabernacle began its decline, at least 177 branches had formed in southern Ghana, extending into Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, with over 4,400 members.

KEY WORDS: Ghana, West Africa, Christianity, health, literacy, migration, witchcraft.

IN the early 1920s, Jean-Marie Cessou, French Togo's Catholic primate, witnessed a great transformation as a variety of new religions that abstained from using medicine flooded the religious marketplace in southern Togo.¹ This religious transformation included the proliferation of both the *Kunde* healing cult, originating in the northern Ghanaian savannah, and Faith Tabernacle Congregation, a Philadelphia-based divine healing church.² Cessou, who wrote about the transformation in a Catholic periodical in the

* I wish to thank Sandra Barnes, Jennie Noakes, and the anonymous reviewers for this Journal, for commenting on earlier versions of this article. Many thanks to John Peel and Benjamin Lawrance for helping me with various details of the project. Special thanks to several pastors who gave me access to primary sources: they are Pastors Kenneth Yeager and Ronald Kilbride of Faith Tabernacle Congregation in Philadelphia, Pastors Samuel Okai and Samuel Quaye of Faith Tabernacle Congregation in Accra, and Pastors James Clark and Joshua Sampong of First Century Gospel, New Jersey. Thanks to Zeljko Rezek for his invaluable help preparing the map. Finally, thanks to Monica Blanchard, Catholic University librarian, for providing me with the Cessou article referenced throughout this piece. Author's email: adammoehr@sas.upenn.edu.

¹ J.-M. Cessou, 'Une religion nouvelle en Afrique Occidentale: le "Goro" ou "Kunde"', *Études Missionnaires: Supplément à la Revue d'Histoire des Missions*, 4 (April 1936), 1–39 and 4 (November 1936), 230–43.

² Cessou refers to both *Kunde* and *Goro* in his article. In Ewe-speaking regions such as Lome, *Kunde* was known as *Goro*, meaning 'kola' in Hausa. J. Allman and J. Parker, *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God* (Bloomington, 2005), 139. A consecrated kola nut was usually eaten by initiates to cement the relationship between deity and supplicant, hence the name *Goro*. M. J. Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (New York, 1960), 89.

1930s, described many similarities between these two healing-centered religions. Mistakenly, he claimed that *Kunde* and Faith Tabernacle were derived from Christian Science.³ He noticed correctly, however, that both religious institutions were established locally in Lome by Togolese labor migrants, who seasonally traveled to Ghana to harvest cocoa.⁴ He further noted that Faith Tabernacle was more popular among the literate Christian migrants, since English literacy was necessary to read Faith Tabernacle's literature.⁵

This article argues – as Cessou observed – that Faith Tabernacle was a spiritual response of the same type as *Kunde* and other healing cults, becoming particularly popular among young, literate, Christian labor migrants. It emerged in the context of colonial capitalist expansion, widespread social unrest, and rampant witchcraft accusations, with the 1918–19 influenza pandemic being the major catalyst leading to the divine healing church's establishment.⁶ Faith Tabernacle's extensive network developed in a non-linear fashion: the church did not solely spread from the first established branch in Winneba, but several networks were independently organized and only later integrated with the flagship branch. By 1926, when a division in Philadelphia led to the church's decline in colonial Ghana, Faith Tabernacle had garnered over 4,400 members in the country's religiously plural environment.

While recent studies have recounted the development of healing cults in southern Ghana (and to a lesser extent Togo) with great detail during the first quarter of the twentieth century, much less has been written about Faith Tabernacle in Ghana during this period.⁷ This article seeks to provide a detailed account of Faith Tabernacle's expansion, departing from previous scholarly discussions of Faith Tabernacle in Ghana in three significant respects. First, this article takes the denomination – Faith Tabernacle Congregation – as the historical subject, considered from the time when the first congregation was formed in 1918 through to its zenith in 1926. Second, I incorporate a wide breadth of sources, including records from the Faith Tabernacle Congregation Archive in Philadelphia and Accra, as well as from the archives of several other churches founded by former Faith

³ Cessou, 'Une religion nouvelle', 5, 10, and 17. In fact, Christian Science was not established in Ghana until 1951. Nicole Lapenta (Christian Science archivist), personal communication, 5 Nov. 2009.

⁴ Cessou, 'Une religion nouvelle', 5 and 9–10.

⁵ *Ibid.* 6 and 9–10. English literacy was frequently a prerequisite for full membership into many Protestant Churches in Ghana (and West Africa generally) in the early twentieth century. S. Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: 'How to Play the Game of Life'* (Bloomington, 2002), 83–95.

⁶ As in southern Africa, the pandemic prompted the formation of anti-biomedical, healing-centered churches. T. Ranger, 'The influenza pandemic in Southern Rhodesia: a crisis of comprehension', in D. Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester, 1988), 172–88.

⁷ For Ghana, see Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*. For Togo, see B. N. Lawrance, *Locality, Mobility, and 'Nation': Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland, 1900–1960* (Rochester, 2007), 95–102. Both R. W. Wyllie ('Pioneers of Ghanaian Pentecostalism: Peter Anim and James McKeown', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 6 (1974), 109–22) and E. K. Larbi (*Pentecostalism: the Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra, 2001)) have discussed Faith Tabernacle's success in Ghana.

Tabernacle leaders and members, such as the First Century Gospel Church (in Philadelphia; Hamilton, New Jersey; and Accra), the Christ Apostolic Church (in Accra), and the Church of Pentecost (in Accra).⁸ Oral histories were also collected from the children of the earliest Faith Tabernacle members in Ghana, as well as from the current Faith Tabernacle leadership in Philadelphia and Accra. Third, this article contextualizes the growth and development of Faith Tabernacle in Ghana within the political, economic, and religious milieu of southern Ghana during the 1910s and 1920s.

With respect to the religious environment in Ghana during the early twentieth century, this study is situated between two bodies of literature that rarely interact. The first considers the context and proliferation of witchcraft and healing cults during the colonial period, while the second seeks to make historical sense of the meteoric rise of Pentecostalism in Ghana (and Nigeria).⁹ Scholars within these two fields have only briefly discussed the relationship between the two. For instance, Thomas McCaskie wrote that healing cults in Asante provided similar services to some churches, which were the principal competitors to these cults.¹⁰ Meanwhile, John Peel noted similarities between the young men involved in Nigeria's Faith Tabernacle and those involved in the *Atinga* (*Tigare* in Ghana) healing cult.¹¹ As Ruth Marshall argues, Christianity and occult practices have participated in the same field of social practice in West Africa and have been produced by the same historical forces.¹²

This religiously plural environment shared by Faith Tabernacle and several healing cults in Ghana during the first quarter of the twentieth century also included a few spiritual churches (*sunsum sore*), independent of any Euro-American affiliation, such as The Church of the Twelve Apostles (established 1914) and Musama Disco Christo Church (established 1922). These spiritual churches had similarities to Faith Tabernacle, such as robust healing practices as well as resource sharing between, and illness

⁸ The primary source materials utilized in this article from Faith Tabernacle's archive in Philadelphia are the letters exchanged between Faith Tabernacle correspondents in Ghana (as well as Côte D'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Togo) and Faith Tabernacle's presiding elder in Philadelphia. The letters in the archive are not, however, the originals, but are summaries that range in length from two sentences to multiple pages. Sometime in 1922, the presiding elder, Ambrose Clark, decided to organize the letters he was receiving into files, which were categorized by branch. These files included the name and address of each branch leader, as well as summaries of each letter received along with the date on which the letter was written. Responses to these letters were often included, following the summaries.

⁹ For healing cults, see Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*; T. C. McCaskie, 'Anti-witchcraft cults in Asante: an essay in the social history of an African people', *History in Africa*, 8 (1981), 125–54; J. Parker, 'Witchcraft, anti-witchcraft and trans-regional ritual innovation in early colonial Ghana: Sakrabundi and Aberewa, 1889–1910', *Journal of African History*, 45:3 (2004), 393–420; N. Gray, 'Independent spirits: the politics of policing anti-witchcraft movements in colonial Ghana, 1908–1927', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 35:2 (2005), 139–58. For Pentecostalism, see B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Trenton, 1999); Larbi, *Pentecostalism*.

¹⁰ McCaskie, 'Anti-witchcraft', 137.

¹¹ J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London, 1968), 97.

¹² R. Marshall, *Pentecostal Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago, 2009), 26.

management by, church members as opposed to kin.¹³ Yet Faith Tabernacle, unlike the spiritual churches, rigorously enforced tithing (members paying 10% of their income to the church), and shunned polygamy.¹⁴

Uniquely, Faith Tabernacle was the predecessor to early Pentecostalism in Ghana; the first Pentecostal church – the British-based Apostolic Church – emerged from within the extensive Faith Tabernacle network. Like Faith Tabernacle, the Pentecostal churches practiced (a form of) divine healing, delivered the possessed from malevolent spirits, combated witchcraft, enforced monogamy, and tithed regularly. Unlike Faith Tabernacle, Pentecostals worshipped ecstatically and believed that Baptism in the Holy Spirit – a concept frequently discussed in the pages of Faith Tabernacle’s literature – was only evidenced by speaking in tongues.

The establishment of Faith Tabernacle (and to a lesser extent the Apostolic Church) points to the importance of literacy, published material, and transnational correspondence in creating a unique set of opportunities and affiliations for Christians in colonial Ghana. This transnational correspondence enabled the establishment of a church with ties to the United States that was led by West Africans and not directly overseen by foreign missionaries. In Ghana, Faith Tabernacle was the religious equivalent of the (fairly secular) literary clubs that were active during the same period.¹⁵ Primarily, Faith Tabernacle and the literary clubs consisted of newly educated but otherwise non-status-holding young men, who banded together to debate moral issues. Their texts, however, were different: literary clubs reflected on British fiction, while Faith Tabernacle discussed the Bible and Faith Tabernacle literature from Philadelphia.

FAITH TABERNACLE’S ORIGINS AND MISSION STRATEGY

Faith Tabernacle was established in 1897 by Jacob Thomas Wilhide, a leader in John Alexander Dowie’s Christian Catholic Church, which was the largest divine healing church in the United States at the turn of the century.¹⁶ The first Faith Tabernacle pastor was John Wesley Ankins, who worked in conjunction with Wilhide in Philadelphia but led a group that met separately.¹⁷ Ankins’s group, originally called Gospel Mission, was formally affiliated with the Christian Catholic Church until about 1899, when it cut ties with Dowie’s church.¹⁸ In February 1904, Gospel Mission purchased its first church building in Philadelphia at 2738–40 North 2nd Street, after which it changed its name from Gospel Mission to Faith Tabernacle Congregation.¹⁹

¹³ C. G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some ‘Spiritual’ Churches* (London, 1962), 131–41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 129.

¹⁵ Newell, *Literary Culture*, 27–52.

¹⁶ For a complete account of Faith Tabernacle’s early domestic history, see A. Mohr, ‘Out of Zion into Philadelphia and West Africa: Faith Tabernacle Congregation, 1897–1925’, *Pneuma*, 32:1 (2010), 56–79.

¹⁷ ‘Obeying God in baptism’, *Leaves of Healing*, 5:19 (4 March 1899), 364.

¹⁸ F. Zehring, ‘Our church history (Faith Tabernacle Congregation)’, unpublished paper (Faith Tabernacle Congregation Secondary School, Harrisburg, PA, 1974).

¹⁹ Philadelphia City Archives, Department of Records, Office of Land Transfer and Deeds, 2738–2740 N. Second Street. The first known periodical issue listing Faith Tabernacle as the name of the church is *Sword of the Spirit*, 4:12–5:1 (April–May 1904).

Faith Tabernacle practiced and preached divine healing: trusting in God alone for all health needs and abstaining from all other forms of healing, whether spiritual or biomedical. This theology was expounded in the church's literature, particularly in their monthly periodical called *Sword of the Spirit*, first published in May 1901.²⁰ By 1903, *Sword of the Spirit* was encouraging its readers to become 'home missionaries', suggesting that they send in the names and addresses of interested friends to be put on the church's mailing list;²¹ and by 1908 Faith Tabernacle had established a missionary department.²² The objective of the church was not to send missionaries into other parts of the world, as many churches had done, but to send monthly supplies of Faith Tabernacle literature to followers around the world to distribute locally. In fact, in the ensuing years, Ambrose Clark – Faith Tabernacle's second presiding elder, who led the church from at least October 1917 – denied several requests to send missionaries from Philadelphia to Ghana.²³

The first pieces of Faith Tabernacle literature to reach colonial Ghana were sent in the first decade of the twentieth century to European or American mainline missionaries, who in turn distributed them to Ghanaians in their churches and schools. Some missionaries were divine healing proponents and, on occasion, their Christian bookshops sold materials written by divine healing advocates.²⁴ A European or American missionary, referred to as 'brother' in the article, most likely wrote the first testimony from Ghana, published in *Sword of the Spirit* in August 1906. The author described non-specific 'blessings' that resulted from reading the periodical and explained that he then distributed it among his friends.²⁵ Because other British and American evangelical literature only began to be imported to Ghana in bulk after 1914, Faith Tabernacle was one of the very first – if not the first – evangelical church to disseminate its literature in Ghana.²⁶

Many Ghanaian Christians came into contact with Faith Tabernacle literature through their church or church school, and found the message of divine healing attractive. Some wrote to the central branch in Philadelphia for more *Swords*, sermons, and tracts, and began evangelizing locally as the leadership in Philadelphia had suggested.²⁷ Before formal branches of Faith Tabernacle were established in 1918, the divine healing church functioned as a para-church organization: an extra-denominational Christian

²⁰ J. W. Ankins, 'A history of the Lord's work in Kensington, Phila', *Sword of the Spirit*, 1:3 (July 1901), 6.

²¹ 'Become a home missionary', *Sword of the Spirit*, 3:8–9 (Dec. 1903–Jan. 1904), 3.

²² 'Missionary department', *Sword of the Spirit*, 8:7–8 (Nov.–Dec. 1908), 2.

²³ 'Missionary department', *Sword of the Spirit*, 9:5 (Sept. 1909), 7. Faith Tabernacle Congregation Archive (FTC), Correspondence Notebooks (CN), Philadelphia, J. M. Ammah to Ambrose Clark, 27 July 1925; Isaiah Lartey Bennett to Ambrose Clark, 21 Nov. 1924; J. Cudjoe Dadzie to Ambrose Clark, 26 Sept. 1923.

²⁴ 'For the glory of God', *Sword of the Spirit*, 21:3 (n.d.), 2; 'African and son healed of smallpox', *Leaves of Healing*, 9:25 (12 Oct. 1901), 809. A. Mohr, 'Missionary medicine and Akan therapeutics: illness, health and healing in southern Ghana's Basel Mission, 1828–1918', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 39:4 (2009), 435–7; Newell, *Literary Culture*, 11.

²⁵ 'Publishing house notes', *Sword of the Spirit*, 6:6 (Oct. 1906), 4. Typically, in later testimonies, West African writers were referred to as 'natives'.

²⁶ Newell, *Literary Culture*, 87.

²⁷ 'For the glory of God', 3.

institution that distributed its literature and had followers within various denominations.

COCOA, SOCIAL UNREST, AND WITCHCRAFT

Faith Tabernacle spread rapidly within the socioeconomic context of the colonial cocoa industry. In 1896 or 1897, pioneering male farmers from several Akuapem towns, many of whom were affiliated with the Basel Mission, started buying forest land for cocoa plantations in various parts of Akyem Abuakwa, located west of Akuapem across the Densu River.²⁸ Quickly, however, the industry expanded beyond members of this denomination and region.²⁹ Nearly all the production was undertaken by local Ghanaian planters, who engineered the rapid growth of the cocoa industry along distinct capitalist lines.³⁰ By 1911, Ghana had become the world's largest cocoa producer, and by 1920 cocoa amounted to 83 per cent of Ghana's export earnings.³¹ As the most lucrative industry in Ghana during the first quarter of the twentieth century, cocoa made many people wealthy.

Alongside producing a significant amount of wealth, the cocoa industry instigated rapid social change by altering the lineage-based subsistence economy. It strengthened individual male farmers but weakened matrilineal families, since money earned from cocoa farming was considered the property of individual farmers, not of the matrilineage, as was the case with other sorts of earnings.³² Furthermore, many farmers were able to bypass the traditional inheritance system and bequeath their cocoa farms to their sons, not to their matrilineage.³³ This caused intense conflict with respect to the distribution of wealth and inherited property between conjugal families and matrilineages.

Many people who lived through that period remarked that 'cocoa destroys kinship, and divides blood relations'.³⁴ This widespread social unrest within families provoked witchcraft accusations, which M. J. Field reported had increased considerably since the cocoa boom.³⁵ Witchcraft was believed to be affective and inherited within the matrilineage, representing what Peter Geschiere has termed, for another West African context, the 'dark side of

²⁸ P. Hill, *The Migrant Cocoa-farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study in Rural Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1963), 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 168.

³⁰ P. Hill, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer: A Preliminary Survey* (London, 1956), 106; R. J. Southall, 'Cadbury on the Gold Coast, 1907–1938: the dilemma of the "model firm" in a colonial economy' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1975), 19–20; G. Austin, "'Mode of production or mode of cultivation": explaining the failure of European cocoa planters in competition with African farmers in colonial Ghana', in W. G. Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Cocoa Pioneer Fronts Since 1800: The Role of Smallholders, Planters and Merchants* (London, 1996), 164.

³¹ G. B. Kay, *The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana* (Cambridge, 1972), 15.

³² J. Allman and V. Tashjian, *'I Will Not Eat Stone': A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH, 2000), 223.

³³ P. Hill, 'The migrant cocoa farmers of southern Ghana', *Africa*, 31:3 (1961), 216.

³⁴ Allman and Tashjian, *'I Will Not Eat Stone'*, 123; G. Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana* (Washington, DC, 1992), 112.

³⁵ M. J. Field, 'Some new shrines of the Gold Coast and their significance', *Africa*, 13:2 (1940), 138–49.

kinship'.³⁶ In and around this time, witchcraft was believed to be capable of burning down cocoa farms or causing a poor crop, in addition to provoking other woes such as sterility, impotence, and disease.³⁷ It was also particularly known for killing children. More generally, witchcraft in Ghana was symptomatic of a conflicted and unstable society.³⁸

The threat of witchcraft demanded extraordinary prophylaxis. Novel forms of therapy were introduced in southern Ghana by new healing cults such as *Nana Tonga*, *Tigari*, or the aforementioned *Kunde*. These cults functioned to locate and heal witches, not persecute and eliminate them through judicial ordeals, which were forms of ritual cleansing outlawed by colonial authorities. While healing cults in southern Ghana did not originate with the cocoa industry (the first one appeared in 1879), the social instability produced by that industry was conducive to the spread of these cults. Such instability was accompanied by a competitive ritual economy characterized by innovative forms of spiritual therapy.³⁹ These forms of spiritual therapy were not only accessed through healing cults but also through new forms of Christian healing, particularly within Faith Tabernacle.

Between 1906, when the first testimony from Ghana was published in *Sword of the Spirit*, and early 1918, Christians in Ghana were reading, discussing, and distributing Faith Tabernacle literature. But only one branch had been formed in 1918, before the influenza pandemic ravaged southern Ghana and catalyzed the rapid expansion of Faith Tabernacle.

THE TWO FAITH TABERNACLE NARRATIVES: WINNEBA AND ASAMANKESE

In Ghana, the first Faith Tabernacle congregation was established in Winneba sometime in the first half of 1918, before the influenza pandemic erupted in September. Two brothers, Joel Sackey Sam and Josephus Kobina Sam, were walking one morning towards the Muni Lagoon and found a copy of a Faith Tabernacle sermon on the ground, partly covered in mud. After becoming interested in the sermon's message, the two brothers began corresponding with Pastor Ambrose Clark in Philadelphia and established a branch in Winneba.⁴⁰ Joel Sackey Sam, assisted by his brother, became the leader of this flagship Faith Tabernacle branch in Ghana.⁴¹ The two Sam brothers, who were formerly elders in the Wesleyan Mission, started their congregation initially with some of their family and a few members of their former church.⁴² Not long after this Faith Tabernacle congregation was formed, the influenza pandemic erupted.

³⁶ P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville, 1997).

³⁷ H. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and its Effect on the Akan Tribes* (Accra, 1961), 42–4.

³⁸ Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 134.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 106–42.

⁴⁰ S. Okai, *General History of Faith Tabernacle Congregation Ghana* (Accra, 2002), 1.

⁴¹ FTC, CN, Joel Sackey Sam to Ambrose Clark, 1 Aug. 1924.

⁴² Okai, *General History*, 1. R. Wyllie (*The Spirit Seekers: New Religious Movements in Southern Ghana* (Missoula, 1980), 23) claimed that the initial congregation comprised 17 members.

The 1918–19 influenza pandemic catalyzed the rapid spread of Faith Tabernacle in Ghana, partly because this virus resulted in extreme suffering in both Philadelphia and Ghana. In Philadelphia, the influenza virus produced the highest mortality rate of any city in Europe or North America: nearly 1 per cent of the population (almost 16,000 people) died between September and late December 1918.⁴³ Faith Tabernacle recorded the success of its congregation in the midst of this pandemic in the *Sword of the Spirit*. The headline of the October 1918 issue read ‘God’s witnesses to divine healing: healed of Spanish influenza and pleuro-pneumonia’. Inside were testimonies given by two women, as well as a list of over fifty persons miraculously healed of influenza and accompanying pneumonia through their faith in God alone. Other healing testimonies from the 1918–19 influenza pandemic were recorded in the periodical the following year and continued until the late 1920s.⁴⁴ These healing testimonies circulated in Winneba as well as the various Christian circles throughout Ghana where Faith Tabernacle literature was read.

In colonial Ghana, the influenza pandemic caused the worst short-term demographic disaster in the twentieth century: approximately 100,000 Ghanaians died, mostly between October and December 1918.⁴⁵ No institutionalized form of therapy or religion in the country could successfully combat the disease. Colonial physicians in Ghana did not know what caused the pandemic, how to arrest the virus’s progress, or how to treat its victims. Biomedical practitioners in Ghana were not only unprepared to treat the infected but their facilities were already severely understaffed due to the need for physicians in Europe to treat soldiers injured during the First World War. Akan healers, too, were reported to be ineffective.⁴⁶ The mainstream churches did not offer any form of spiritual protection against the virus. Most churches, in fact, were closed by government order.⁴⁷

Unlike the mainline churches, Faith Tabernacle responded proactively. At the peak of the pandemic in October and November, many people were brought from the nearby Winneba hospital to Faith Tabernacle’s divine healing home, called ‘Faith Home’, which was a place for the sick to rest, be prayed for, and heal.⁴⁸ As with Philadelphia survivors recorded in *Sword of*

⁴³ J. M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (New York, 2004), 197–9; J. M. Barry, ‘Spit causes death’, *Philadelphia Magazine* (Oct. 1998), 81–199.

⁴⁴ ‘Healed of Spanish influenza and pleuro-pneumonia’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 17:8 (Oct. 1918), 1–2; ‘Testimony of Margaret Henry’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 18:8 (n.d.), 2–3; ‘Testimony of Mrs. Sarah B. Duffy’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 18:10 (n.d.), 2; ‘Testimony of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Proudfoot’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 22:10 (n.d.), 3; ‘Testimony of Miss Natalie D. Wurts’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 24:3 (n.d.), 2.

⁴⁵ K. D. Patterson, ‘The influenza epidemic of 1918–19 in the Gold Coast’, *Journal of African History*, 24:4 (1983), 502.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 492; N. Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana: 1835–1960* (Accra, 1966), 159.

⁴⁸ The original ‘Faith Home’ was established in October 1907 in Philadelphia, located in a building adjacent to the Faith Tabernacle sanctuary. ‘Faith Tabernacle Home’, *Sword of the Spirit*, 7:6 (Oct. 1907), 4. Other divine healing homes were established in Dunkwa by Joseph Addo and in Kwadwowusu by E. B. Apemah. FTC, CN, Joseph Addo to Ambrose Clark, 15 July 1924; E. B. Apemah to Ambrose Clark, 25 Jan. 1925.

the Spirit, many Ghanaian survivors testified to their miraculous healing from the virus without the use of any medication. The ability of the church to heal, in contrast to the hospital's inability to do so, looms large in the memories of the descendants of the Sam brothers in Winneba.⁴⁹

After the influenza pandemic struck Winneba, small congregations began to emerge on the outskirts of Winneba and later in various coastal towns.⁵⁰ Fante migrants from Winneba established branches as far away as Côte d'Ivoire and northern Nigeria.⁵¹ However, a significant amount of the evangelizing in Ghana was done by a former Basel Mission elder from Asienimpon (outside Kumasi) named Kwadjo Nti, who spread Faith Tabernacle's doctrines and healing practices around all major ethnic regions of southern Ghana and into Togo from the flagship congregation in Winneba.⁵² Between 1918 and 1926, Winneba functioned as Ghana's national headquarters, hosting annual meetings on the present site of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, where local pastors were ordained and elders anointed.⁵³ Joel Sackey Sam was the final authority in Ghana and had the power to approve new pastors, endorse new branches, or merge existing branches.⁵⁴

Joel Sackey Sam, however, was not the only ordained Faith Tabernacle pastor with a significant following in Ghana. Peter Anim established a thriving branch of the church in the cocoa migrant town of Asamankese, in the heart of Akyem Abuakwa, and garnered nine other branches under his authority. Anim was arguably the second most powerful Faith Tabernacle pastor in Ghana during the 1920s.⁵⁵ He was originally from the adjoining towns of Anum and Boso on the eastern bank of the Volta River. He was schooled by and later employed in the service of the Basel Mission.⁵⁶ In 1917, while living in Boso, Anim obtained a copy of *Sword of the Spirit*. Impressed with the church's divine healing message, he became a subscriber. In 1920, his first wife died, after which he began to follow Faith Tabernacle teachings. In 1921, Anim contracted guinea worm and wrote to Ambrose Clark, who encouraged him to have faith and trust God for his healing. Anim was later healed of this parasitic infection, along with chronic stomach pain. After his healing, he withdrew from membership of the Basel Mission at Boso and

⁴⁹ Interview with Kenneth Gyasi Sam (eldest son of Josephus Kobina Sam), Winneba, 16 February 2007.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ FTC, CN, I. G. Hayford to Ambrose Clark, 15 Oct. 1924; S. A. Mensah to Ambrose Clark, 9 Sept. 1924 and 22 Dec. 1924; Dan K. Turkson to Ambrose Clark, 3 Dec. 1924.

⁵² Faith Tabernacle records in Philadelphia refer to Kwadjo Nti as Timothy Anti. Okai, *General History*, 2–5. At this time, in 1918, southern Togo was under British authority, which could have facilitated the circulation of Christian literature and evangelists such as Nti into Togo.

⁵³ P. Anim, *The History of How the Full Gospel was Founded in Ghana* (Accra, n.d.), 3; interview with Pastor Kenneth Gyasi Sam, Winneba, 16 Feb. 2007. FTC, CN, Isaac Ampomah to Ambrose Clark, 3 Jan. 1925; A. M. Boateng to Ambrose Clark, 6 June 1925; J. E. D. Wallace to Ambrose Clark, 3 Mar. 1925.

⁵⁴ FTC, CN, D. A. Thompson to Ambrose Clark, 5 Dec. 1924.

⁵⁵ Anim, *History*. Anim frequently helped to resolve conflicts in the Faith Tabernacle community with Joel Sackey Sam, particularly in the Nsawam branch. FTC, CN, J. M. Ammah to Ambrose Clark, 6 Dec. 1924; Peter Anim to Ambrose Clark, 10 Feb. 1925.

⁵⁶ Anim, *History*, 1; Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 99.

settled in Asamankese, following a massive labor migration of Anum and Bosu residents, who migrated to work in the cocoa industry from as early as 1907.⁵⁷

Anim's Faith Tabernacle branch became wildly successful in the first half of the 1920s. By 1921, he had begun evangelizing in Asamankese and was soon joined by several converts. A Basel minister's report from Asamankese two years later lamented that their members were joining Faith Tabernacle in droves.⁵⁸ In October 1923, Anim received a certificate of pastoral authority from Ambrose Clark, giving him the right to baptize and confirm appointments. Between 28 December 1923 and 2 January 1924, Anim attended the annual meeting of Faith Tabernacle pastors in Winneba in order to become more integrated into the larger network of churches.⁵⁹ In a letter to Ambrose Clark written in July 1924, he reported nearly 100 new members and another 122 recent baptisms in his Asamankese church, already with a substantial following.⁶⁰

THE FRAGMENTED EXPANSION OF THE FAITH TABERNACLE NETWORK

Faith Tabernacle's network did not solely grow out from the two nodes of Winneba and Asamankese. Its growth was much more fragmented, as Faith Tabernacle literature was being circulated among mainline churches in all regions of southern Ghana. Faith Tabernacle literature was distributed and circulated in Basel (Presbyterian) and Wesleyan (Methodist) communities primarily, but also among African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Baptist, Bremen (Evangelical Presbyterian), Catholic, and Church Missionary Society (Anglican) members.⁶¹ Subsequently, many other branches emerged independently of Winneba and Asamankese, but were later incorporated into larger networks via various means.

Some branches emerged from evangelical campaigns led by Joel Sackey Sam or Peter Anim.⁶² Some emerged through other individuals' direct exchange of letters with Ambrose Clark in Philadelphia. Clark, after receiving information of newly established branches, typically instructed Sam to visit these stations and establish his authority.⁶³ Other branches – such as

⁵⁷ H. W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra, 1967), 254; Hill, *Migrant cocoa-farmers*, 250.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Presbyterian Church*, 256; Basel Mission, *Synod Committee Meeting, Minutes no. 48* (July 1923) in Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 153. ⁵⁹ Anim, *History*, 3.

⁶⁰ FTC, CN, Peter Anim to Ambrose Clark, 19 July 1924. Baptism did not automatically confirm membership.

⁶¹ FTC, CN, Andrew K. Agbewornoo to Ambrose Clark, 18 Oct. 1924; E. A. Kway-Awir to Ambrose Clark, 17 Aug. 1925; Stephen K. Blekpe to Ambrose Clark, 28 Nov. 1924; J. E. A. Arthur to Ambrose Clark, 1 Feb. 1925; J. E. A. Arthur to Ambrose Clark, 8 May 1925.

⁶² Sam established branches in Bangokre, Juase, Kumasi, Secondi, and Tinkong in this way (FTC, CN, Joel Sackey Sam to Ambrose Clark, 1 July 1924), while Anim founded branches in Amanese, Anum, Apeso-Kubi, Asuboi, Bosu, Finte, Kpese, Kwadwuwusu, and Pese (FTC, CN, Peter Anim to Ambrose Clark, 10 Feb. 1925).

⁶³ Branches such as Abonku-Mankessim, Adeiso, Agona-Kwamang, Cape Coast, Dormang, Koforidua, Mamfe, Mangoase, Obodang, Saltpond, and Tinkong fell under

Asamankese – would garner a network of their own and only later connect with Winneba through the annual pastors' meetings. Still other Faith Tabernacle networks, such as the one based in Keta that had 12 subordinate branches, were never fully integrated into the larger Winneba network.⁶⁴

While Ambrose Clark considered Sam the final authority for all Faith Tabernacle churches in Ghana, local pastors in Ghana had authority over the branches that they helped to establish. This authority included receiving one-third of their tithes, while the congregation kept one-third and the remaining third was sent to the international headquarters in Philadelphia.⁶⁵ These smaller networks often followed migration patterns, cutting across regional or ethnic divisions. For instance, Anim established the branch he led in Asamankese and also ones in Anum and Boso, where he had grown up, as well as in Kpessi (in Togo), a town 305 kilometers north-east of Anum.⁶⁶ Another example was Stephen Blekpe, who led Faith Tabernacle branches in the Anlo-Ewe towns of Keta, Woe, and Kpalime, and established branches as far east as Lome and Tsevie in Togo and as far west as Anyinam in Akyem Abuakwa, which was led by the successful cocoa farmer James Kwame Nkansah.⁶⁷ These trans-regional spheres of influence were recognized in Philadelphia. For example, Ambrose Clark once wrote to Blekpe in Keta not to interfere with 'bodies of new members under the supervision of pastors of other branches', referring specifically to the Ada branch, which Blekpe had recently visited under the authority of D. A. Thompson in Accra.⁶⁸

This fragmented, non-linear mode of expansion was very successful. By May 1920, Ambrose Clark reported a great revival in West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), which included 15 or 20 branches, some with several hundred members. The majority of these branches were in Ghana, not Nigeria: Ghana's Faith Tabernacle membership was nearly four times larger than Nigeria's in the first half of the 1920s.⁶⁹ Ambrose Clark wrote that the Africans with whom he corresponded were receiving the 'Full Gospel' of salvation, and healing from diseases by the power of God alone. Many Ghanaian followers had their testimonies published in *Sword of the Spirit*. For instance, a Ghanaian in Kano, Nigeria, wrote in August 1920,

I don't know why our missionary here did not teach us the full gospel ... They never did wondrous work here as our Lord give the power to the disciples. Should

Sam's influence this way. FTC, CN, Joel Sackey Sam to Ambrose Clark, 24 Feb. 1925, 21 Apr. 1925, and 27 Apr. 1925.

⁶⁴ FTC, CN, Stephen K. Blekpe to Ambrose Clark, 23 May 1925.

⁶⁵ FTC, CN, Benaiah A. Ocansey Nagbagbaley to Ambrose Clark, 7 Feb. 1925. A letter from another branch indicates that, after all its expenses were paid, including the salaries of full-time Christian workers, excess tithes were sent to Philadelphia. FTC, CN, A. M. Boateng to Ambrose Clark, 1 Mar. 1924.

⁶⁶ FTC, CN, D. A. Thompson to Ambrose Clark, 8 Nov. 1924.

⁶⁷ Pastor Blekpe of Keta baptized Nkansah on 10 October 1925 and appointed him pastor at Anyinam. FTC, CN, J. A. Nkansah to Ambrose Clark, 16 Nov. 1924 and 2 Dec. 1925.

⁶⁸ FTC, CN, response to D. A. Thompson to Ambrose Clark, 20 Aug. 1925.

⁶⁹ There were 177 branches in greater Ghana, compared to only 46 Nigerian branches. Moreover, many of the northern Nigeria branches – such as Jos, Kaduna, and Minna – were established by Ghanaian migrants from Winneba. Ghana's estimated membership was 4,425 compared to approximately 920 in Nigeria by 1926.

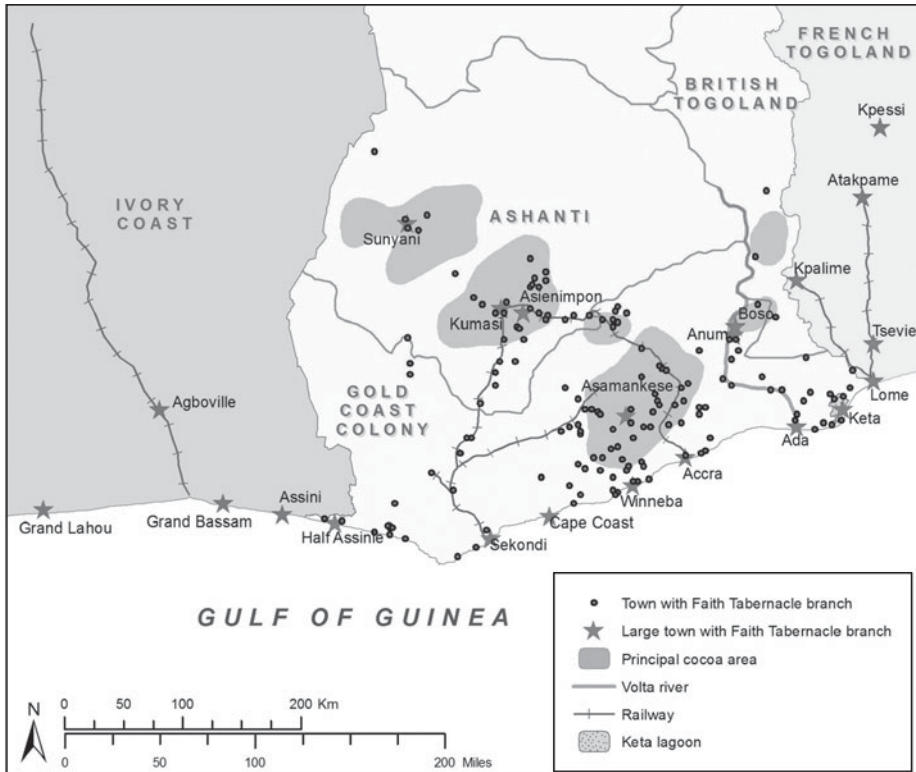


Fig. 1. Location of Faith Tabernacle branches in colonial Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo between 1918 and 1926.

you bring your Divine Healing church out in Africa here and preach the full gospel to the people and healing the sick, many people shall believe in your Gospel than those churches who were teaching us here, because they never done miracle; they never heal the sick ...⁷⁰

Faith Tabernacle's healing practices and theology strongly resonated with mainline Christians who were committed to their faith but had no ritual means of addressing their illnesses or misfortune. By the end of 1923, Ambrose Clark claimed to have distributed thousands of pieces of literature and was receiving up to 200 letters a day from Ghana and Nigeria.⁷¹

By early 1926, there were at least 177 Faith Tabernacle branches in Ghana, extending east into Togo and west into Côte d'Ivoire (see Fig. 1), with 115 leaders from these branches in correspondence with the headquarters in Philadelphia. Leaders reported congregations in 1925 as large as 600 (Half Assini) and 369 (Mangoase).⁷² With a conservative estimate of 25 members

⁷⁰ 'God's blessings continued', *Sword of the Spirit*, 19:2 (n.d.), 4 and 7.

⁷¹ 'For the glory of God', 2–3.

⁷² In the letters mailed to Ambrose Clark, Ghanaian leaders frequently gave statistics with regard to the number of membership forms completed, the membership number of a

per branch, there were approximately 4,425 Faith Tabernacle members in greater Ghana by 1926. By the mid-1920s, these 177 branches were organized into at least twelve districts: Accra, Akuapem, Akyem, Juaso, Keta, Kumasi, Saltpond, Sefwi, Sekondi, Togoland, Volta, and Winneba. But who exactly were these members?

CHRISTIAN CAPITALISTS: CLERKS AND COCOA PRODUCERS IN THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

Faith Tabernacle was predominately a religion of migrant Christian capitalists. These migrant capitalists were involved in two primary economic sectors: colonial administration and foreign trade located along the coast and transportation routes, and cocoa production in the interior. These two major economic sectors corresponded with the two major centers (and networks) of Faith Tabernacle: Winneba on the coast and Asamankese in the intense cocoa-growing region of Akyem Abuakwa.

Nearly 45 per cent of the Faith Tabernacle branches were founded in coastal towns, along railway lines, and near major waterways such as the Keta Lagoon and the Volta River. In particular, Fante migrants, trained to read and write English by Wesleyan missionaries, worked for European trading firms such as Miller's Ltd., the Elder Dempster Steamship Company, Henry Werner and Company, and John Holt and Company.⁷³ Other Ghanaian Faith Tabernacle leaders worked in the colonial administration for the railway (in Ghana and Nigeria), sanitary, and treasury departments, spreading Faith Tabernacle along the coast and other transportation routes.⁷⁴

Most of these clerks were young men. For instance, John Jayne, a label clerk with the railways department and a Faith Tabernacle leader in the Opon Valley, wrote in April 1925 that his 14 newest members were 'mostly storekeepers, traders and clerks averaging in age about 26'.⁷⁵ These young men were of the social category *krakye* (derived from the English word 'clerk'): they were literate men trained in mission schools, who were part

particular branch, or the attendance in a particular congregation on a particular day. Some of the larger numbers include: over 600 members at Half Assini (FTC, CN, Joel Sackey Sam to Ambrose Clark, 28 Sept. 1925) and 369 members at Mangoase (FTC, CN, Joel Sackey Sam to Ambrose Clark, 24 Feb. 1925). Faith Tabernacle membership was not always as exclusive as Ambrose Clark wished, as many members did not fully separate from their prior churches. In 1924, for instance, A. E. Fiagbedzi was leading a Faith Tabernacle congregation in Keta, while still working as a teacher and temporary pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Mission School (FTC, CN, A. E. Fiagbedzi to Ambrose Clark, 8 Oct. 1924).

⁷³ FTC, CN, Hansen N. G. Kwamie to Ambrose Clark, 29 Sept. 1924; Sam E. Andoh to Ambrose Clark, 20 Aug. 1924; Philip K. Gbordjo to Ambrose Clark, 24 September 1924; Michael A. A. Johnson to Ambrose Clark, n.d.; Wyllie, *Spirit Seekers*, 23.

⁷⁴ FTC, CN, J. C. Amankwa to Ambrose Clark, 9 Apr. 1925; Charles W. Amos to Ambrose Clark, 14 Apr. 1925; George C. Dzeketey to Ambrose Clark, 21 Aug. 1925; E. G. L. McCauley to Ambrose Clark, 4 May 1925; John Kwesi Dadzie to Ambrose Clark, 12 Nov. 1924.

⁷⁵ FTC, CN, John Jayne to Ambrose Clark, 25 Apr. 1925.

neither of the chiefly elites in charge of local administration nor of the highly educated and financially secure intelligentsia.⁷⁶

In addition to clerks employed by the colonial government and European firms in coastal towns and on transportation routes, Faith Tabernacle drew members from within the cocoa industry.⁷⁷ Branches in Ghana were found in the largest cocoa-producing regions, such as Akuapem and Akyem (34 branches), Asante (23 branches), Kwahu (7 branches), greater Sunyani (5 branches), and in and around Anum and Boso (4 branches). More than 40 per cent of the Faith Tabernacle branches were founded in cocoa-growing regions in the interior. Many of the Faith Tabernacle leaders, including Peter Anim and Kwadjo Nti, were schooled by the Basel Mission and could have worked either as clerks or farmers within the cocoa industry.⁷⁸ Others leaders, such as James Nkansah of Anyinam and W. A. Johnson of Mumford, were solely cocoa farmers.⁷⁹ One Faith Tabernacle leader in Agboville, Côte d'Ivoire, named J. C. Isaiah, owned his own cocoa-purchasing firm called Isaiah Brothers Ltd.⁸⁰

While a significant number of Faith Tabernacle members – and particularly leaders – were English-literate clerks and cocoa producers, the membership of the church expanded beyond this particular educated class. Many members were only literate in local languages, as shown by the large-scale translation enterprise taken up by many Faith Tabernacle leaders across southern Ghana. For example, one Faith Tabernacle leader tried (unsuccessfully) to mass print Faith Tabernacle literature in Twi by contacting presses in Basel and London.⁸¹ Jacob R. Mensah, who led a congregation near Kumasi, translated Faith Tabernacle hymns into Twi for Joel Sackey Sam in Winneba.⁸² Peter Anim translated over twenty Faith Tabernacle tracts into Twi for distribution in southern Ghana, while Samuel Benoa of Nyakrom translated four tracts.⁸³ Another branch leader asked Ambrose Clark to mail him an English dictionary so that he could translate hymns and Faith Tabernacle literature into Twi.⁸⁴ And in Keta, a member of Stephen K. Blekpe's congregation helped him translate Faith Tabernacle literature, presumably into Ewe.⁸⁵ Another significant reason for translating Faith Tabernacle literature into local languages was so it could be read aloud to non-literate members who did not know English.⁸⁶

⁷⁶ For a detailed description of *krakye* during this time period, see S. F. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington, 2005), 84–114. The one notable exception to this depiction (in Nigeria) was Isaac B. Akinyele, the Faith Tabernacle leader in Ibadan by 1924, who was elected *Olubadan* of Ibadan in 1955 (Peel, *Aladura*, 68).

⁷⁷ The presence of Faith Tabernacle branches in the gold mining towns of Tarkwa, Prestea, and Bibiani suggests how the church appealed to other Christian capitalists.

⁷⁸ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 99; Hill, *Migrant cocoa-farmers*, 41.

⁷⁹ FTC, CN, James K. Nkansah to George W. Foster, 25 Sept. 1935; W. A. Johnson to Ambrose Clark, 29 Jan. 1925.

⁸⁰ FTC, CN, J. C. Isaiah to Ambrose Clark, 4 Apr. 1925.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² FTC, CN, Jacob R. Mensah to Ambrose Clark, 29 June 1925.

⁸³ FTC, CN, Peter Anim to Ambrose Clark, 29 July 1924; Samuel Benoa to Ambrose Clark, 22 Oct. 1924.

⁸⁴ FTC, CN, J. E. D. Wallace to Ambrose Clark, 18 June 1925.

⁸⁵ FTC, CN, Stephen K. Blekpe to Ambrose Clark, 14 Mar. 1925.

⁸⁶ FTC, CN, Isaac Ampomah to Ambrose Clark, 12 Oct. 1924; A. M. Boateng to Ambrose Clark, 12 Sept. 1925; Samuel Benoa to Ambrose Clark, 26 Jan. 1925; Joseph Addo to Ambrose Clark, 22 Aug. 1925.

Not only did Faith Tabernacle membership swell beyond the literate, educated class of its leaders but it also transcended categories of gender and age. While there were no female pastors, branch leaders, or correspondents, there were many women who were members of Faith Tabernacle in Ghana.⁸⁷ And children were brought into Faith Tabernacle – as in mainline churches – through the establishment of schools.⁸⁸ At its zenith in 1926, Faith Tabernacle had become a popular movement cutting across ethnic, gender, age, and education lines.

HEALING, WEALTH, AND PROTECTION: FAITH TABERNACLE'S
SUCCESS IN A COMPETITIVE THERAPEUTIC MARKETPLACE

Faith Tabernacle became a significant denomination in Ghana's Christian community in only eight short years. During that time, it garnered approximately 4,425 members within 177 congregations. By 1926, the Basel Mission – the oldest church in Ghana, established nearly one hundred years earlier (in 1828) – claimed roughly 22,000 members in 260 congregations.⁸⁹ In comparison, Faith Tabernacle acquired 20 per cent of the Basel Mission's membership (as well as several of its pastors), worshipping in over 68 per cent of its congregations.

While many Faith Tabernacle members came from the mainline churches, significantly, the Philadelphia-based divine healing church competed with the new healing cults, as Cessou observed. Faith Tabernacle had two distinct advantages over those cults. First, while the church was able to redress illness and misfortune spiritually just as healing cults did, it took a different approach to managing witchcraft. Second, Faith Tabernacle was not legally suppressed by the colonial government as healing cults were.

Illness and witchcraft

Faith Tabernacle's success in combating illness, misfortune, and antisocial behavior is apparent from several testimonies written by Ghanaians in *Sword of the Spirit* during the 1920s. A man's dead daughter was brought back to life through prayer.⁹⁰ A man with stomach pains caused by Satan confessed his sins, asked for deliverance in the name of Jesus, and was healed within a few minutes.⁹¹ A man with dysentery was healed by his pastor after acknowledging that 'the Blood of Jesus Christ had washed away all man's sorrows and sicknesses'.⁹² A Faith Tabernacle pastor exorcized evil spirits from two women and healed a man of paralysis.⁹³ A man displaying sinful

⁸⁷ FTC, CN, A. E. Fiagbedzi to Ambrose Clark, 8 Oct. 1924; John Jayne to Ambrose Clark, 1 Dec. 1924.

⁸⁸ FTC, CN, S. A. Mensah to Ambrose Clark, 22 Dec. 1924. Anim, *Full Gospel*, 3.

⁸⁹ Smith, *Presbyterian Church*, 292.

⁹⁰ 'From our correspondence', *Sword of the Spirit*, 24:2 (n.d.), 7. These testimonies were published listing only individuals' initials and not their full names. Moreover, only the place of origin of the testimony was listed. Because many Ghanaians worked in Nigeria, I include testimonies that were written from both Ghana and Nigeria.

⁹¹ 'From our correspondence', *Sword of the Spirit*, 24:3 (n.d.), 8.

⁹² 'From our correspondence', *Sword of the Spirit*, 21:9 (n.d.), 6.

⁹³ 'From our correspondence', *Sword of the Spirit*, 25:33 (n.d.), 8.

behavior was delivered from the power of Satan.⁹⁴ An alcoholic and idolater was delivered from sinful behavior through Faith Tabernacle's message.⁹⁵

Faith Tabernacle was successful in combating not only illness, antisocial behavior, and misfortune but also witchcraft, one of the most prolific disorders in colonial Ghana during the 1920s. However, no references to witches or witchcraft exist in *Sword of the Spirit* testimonies. This omission, I believe, is due to two interrelated reasons. First, witchcraft was not mentioned because it was not a recognized afflicting agent within the Faith Tabernacle community in the United States. There were no published healing testimonies from witchcraft attacks by American members of the church. Possibly, Ghanaian correspondents did not write about witchcraft attacks because they were never featured in the periodical. Alternatively, Faith Tabernacle editors might have chosen to print only those testimonies with no mention of witchcraft; or, perhaps, discussions of witchcraft were rephrased.

Second, in colonial Ghana 'evil spirits' and 'the Devil' became a Christianized version of witchcraft, particularly manifest in oral and written accounts in English.⁹⁶ This process occurred both before and after the 1920s.⁹⁷ For instance, in 1881 the Basel missionary and linguist J. G. Christaller wrote that witches 'stand in some agreement with the devil'.⁹⁸ An examination of Faith Tabernacle Ghana's minutes book from the late 1930s and early 1940s shows that characteristics of Satan had parallels in Akan witchcraft, such as his tendency to operate at night and the frequency with which he afflicted children.⁹⁹ Within the Ghanaian Faith Tabernacle community during the 1920s, discussion of evil spirits or the Devil probably operated as Anglicized accounts of witchcraft attacks.

In colonial Ghana, Faith Tabernacle protected its followers from witchcraft, demons, and the Devil. Unlike healing cults, however, the church was not concerned with the healing and reintegration of witches into the extended family and ultimately placating intra-familial conflict. Rather, Faith Tabernacle sought to make distinct religious and social divisions between individuals and their non-Christian families. These divisions extended into the economic sphere, where members were expected to give tithes to the church but not financially contribute to rituals associated with the matrilineage. For example, several Faith Tabernacle members in Dunkwa publicly quarreled with their non-church families because the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* ⁹⁵ 'From our correspondence', *Sword of the Spirit*, 21:3 (n.d.), 7.

⁹⁶ B. Meyer, "'If you are a devil, you are a witch and, if you are a witch than you are a devil': the integration of 'pagan' ideas into the conceptual universe of Ewe Christians in southeastern Ghana", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 22 (1992), 98–132; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 135.

⁹⁷ Within the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle community, the 1930 revival led by Joseph Babalola was understood as a battle against the Devil that included witchcraft (Peel, *Aladura*, 96).

⁹⁸ J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi (Twi)* (Basel, 1933), 11.

⁹⁹ In the minutes book (1936–43), two healing testimonies were given from witchcraft attacks in the early 1940s (Faith Tabernacle Congregation Ghana, *Minutes Book*, 190, 213). Most testimonies, however, referred to Satanic attacks (*Minutes Book*, 166, 167, 172, 179), including Satan operating at night (*Minutes Book*, 192) and Satan attacking children (*Minutes Book*, 174, 203–4, 219, 235, 245, 272).

members refused to contribute money towards purchasing alcoholic beverages for family funerals.¹⁰⁰ Faith Tabernacle therefore supported individual wealth attainment (within the conjugal family) to the detriment of the matrilineage, as well as providing spiritual forms of protection against witchcraft accusations often directed at individuals deemed affluent or greedy. Through these tenets, it became a highly appealing religious option for Ghanaian labor migrants who sought to retain control over and enjoy their wage earnings.

Legality

A second reason that Faith Tabernacle flourished was that, unlike healing cults, the church was not outlawed by the colonial government. The *Aberewa* cult, for example, was banned between 1912 and 1932, a period that encompassed Faith Tabernacle's proliferation in southern Ghana. Later, in 1939, *Kunde* was outlawed also.¹⁰¹ The colonial government's attempt to protect the public by banning these movements (and others like them) led to heightened anxiety, which, in turn, increased demand for supernatural protection.¹⁰² This political environment led to the popularity of Faith Tabernacle, which was never outlawed by the government for ritual activities aimed at ensuring members' health and wellbeing. Agreeing with the government, the mainline churches rigorously opposed healing cults but generally tolerated Faith Tabernacle and its members, since it was a Christian organization of American origin and missionaries originally circulated its literature.¹⁰³

But colonial political and religious authorities, such as Jean-Marie Cessou in Togo, confused Faith Tabernacle with healing cults.¹⁰⁴ Thus, because of the periodic outlawing of healing cults, Faith Tabernacle pastors were adamant about receiving their pastoral authority from Philadelphia in the form of a certificate, which was a necessary criterion to lead a congregation without missionaries present.¹⁰⁵ In Keta, for example, A. E. Fiagbedzi pleaded with

¹⁰⁰ FTC, CN, Joseph Addo to Ambrose Clark, 1 Sept. 1925. Faith Tabernacle prohibited alcohol consumption, which could have added to the conflict.

¹⁰¹ See Allman and Parker (*Tongnaab*, 178–9) for the process by which *Kunde* became outlawed in southern colonial Ghana in 1939.

¹⁰² Gray, 'Independent spirits', 139–40.

¹⁰³ Eventually, mainline churches tried to halt the exodus of their members to Faith Tabernacle. For instance, the Basel Mission in Nyakrom forbade the distribution of Faith Tabernacle literature (FTC, CN, Samuel Benoa to Ambrose Clark, 18 May 1925). Similarly, the pastor of the Bremen Mission at Amedzofe lodged a complaint with the general post master in Accra because Faith Tabernacle was 'promiscuously' mailing literature to their students (FTC, CN, David I. Quartey to Ambrose Clark, 14 Feb. 1925). In still another instance, mainline missionaries, presumably Basel or Wesleyan, tried to petition colonial authorities to prevent Faith Tabernacle's Koforidua branch from holding meetings (FTC, CN, James Kingston Tsagli to Ambrose Clark, 20 Sept. 1924).

¹⁰⁴ Some local people also made charges against Faith Tabernacle followers that seemed to be similar to those laid against the healing cults. For instance, a member of Faith Tabernacle's Wassa Simpah branch was accused in the chief's local court for having magic medicine in his possession with which he could perform special cures and even raise people from the dead. FTC, CN, E. C. Baiden to Ambrose Clark, 12 Sept. 1925.

¹⁰⁵ In order to receive a pastoral certificate, candidates had to complete correctly a questionnaire consisting of seven questions, and mail it back to Philadelphia. FTC, CN,

Ambrose Clark to mail his pastoral authority as soon as possible, since the district commissioner needed documentation from him to recognize his branch as a church.¹⁰⁶ In Juaso, too, J. E. D. Wallace urged Ambrose Clark to send him his official pastoral certificate quickly, at the request of the district commissioner.¹⁰⁷ Finally, in Dunkwa, Joseph Addo claimed to be persecuted by local authorities, a situation that would be amended if he received his pastoral certificate.¹⁰⁸ These certificates of pastoral authority allowed Faith Tabernacle communities all over Ghana to perform their healing practices legally without colonial intervention, unlike many healing cults during the 1920s.¹⁰⁹

THE DECLINE OF FAITH TABERNACLE IN GHANA

Faith Tabernacle grew rapidly in colonial Ghana until a major division occurred in Philadelphia in late 1925. In October of that year, Ambrose Clark left Faith Tabernacle to form the First Century Gospel Church, also in Philadelphia.¹¹⁰ While this fact is uncontested, there are two accounts of the events leading up to Clark's departure. The Faith Tabernacle version claims that Ambrose Clark committed adultery on several occasions and was replaced by George W. Foster as presiding elder.¹¹¹ In contrast, the First Century Gospel version argues that Ambrose Clark was on vacation when a secret meeting of Faith Tabernacle pastors was called by George W. Foster, who secretly took control of the church without Clark's knowledge.¹¹² Both versions concur that Pastor Clark was accused of adultery by the Faith Tabernacle board of elders and his leadership was revoked. As a result, Ambrose Clark, his family, and a large portion of the Faith Tabernacle congregation left to form the First Century Gospel Church.

The two churches fought over both local and West African branches. In the local courts, Ambrose Clark and the Faith Tabernacle leadership battled for the incoming mail addressed to 'Pastor Clark of Faith Tabernacle'. The Philadelphia courts ruled in favor of Clark.¹¹³ Faith Tabernacle mailed a circular to domestic and foreign branches of the church, explaining its version of the split to pastors in late October and congregants in early

James K. Nkansah to George W. Foster, 5 Apr. 1927; J. A. Iyiedo to Ambrose Clark, 27 Aug. 1925. ¹⁰⁶ FTC, CN, A. E. Fiagbedzi to Ambrose Clark, 6 Aug. 1924.

¹⁰⁷ FTC, CN, J. E. D. Wallace to Ambrose Clark, 19 Mar. 1925 and 29 Aug. 1925.

¹⁰⁸ FTC, CN, Joseph Addo to Ambrose Clark, 10 Mar. 1925.

¹⁰⁹ Legitimizing healing through the use of formal certification became popular among other types of healer after 1930. A. Osseo-Asare, 'Bitter roots: African science and the search for healing plants in Ghana, 1885–2005' (unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2005), 113 and 123–4; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 178 and 225.

¹¹⁰ Faith Tabernacle Congregation, *Board of Elders Minutes* (Oct. 1925). A notice in *Sword of the Spirit* ('Announcement', *Sword of the Spirit*, 23:4 (Oct. 1925), 4) stated that since 22 October all letters sent to Ambrose Clark had been forwarded to his home because he was no longer pastor of Faith Tabernacle.

¹¹¹ FTC, Presiding Elder George W. Foster to pastors of the Faith Tabernacle, 29 Oct. 1925.

¹¹² FTC, Pastor A. Clark to Foreign Correspondence, n.d. Also interview with Pastor James Clark, New Jersey, 4 March 2007.

¹¹³ FTC, Pastor A. Clark to Foreign Correspondence, n.d.

December.¹¹⁴ By the time these letters arrived in Ghana, many of the Faith Tabernacle congregations had followed Clark and changed their name to First Century Gospel Church.

In late 1926, Clark wrote in his new monthly periodical, *First Century Gospel*, about his church's large following in Ghana.¹¹⁵ This following included Joel Sackey Sam in Winneba, who, in joining First Century Gospel, destroyed the major Faith Tabernacle network, as Winneba was the central node. Most of the correspondence between Faith Tabernacle in Philadelphia and branches in Ghana dwindled rapidly thereafter.¹¹⁶ The two exceptions were James Nkansah in Anyinam and Timothy Anti in Asienimpon, who continued to correspond with Philadelphia until the 1950s and 1960s, respectively.¹¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Faith Tabernacle erupted on the religious scene in southern colonial Ghana – extending west into Côte d'Ivoire and east into Togo – between 1918 and 1926. It was established within the context of colonialism, the cocoa industry, and rampant witchcraft accusations, and its meteoric rise in Ghana was catalyzed by the 1918–19 influenza pandemic. It initially attracted literate Christian men working in the colonial capitalist economy. With no missionaries present, these men, located in major coastal towns, along transportation routes, and in the cocoa fields, created lines of written communication with the international headquarters in Philadelphia as well as with each other. Soon thereafter, women, children, and illiterates of all ages joined various Faith Tabernacle branches, making it a popular movement. The massive expansion of the divine healing church in southern Ghana resulted from an uncompromising evangelistic effort; Cessou described Faith Tabernacle members as aggressive evangelizers who mocked other pastors and priests, arguing that the mainstream churches were powerless (literally impotent) religions.¹¹⁸

This history of Faith Tabernacle highlights, in several new ways, the power of literacy and the written word in colonial Ghana. First, as a Philadelphia-based church that sent texts but not missionaries, its branches in Ghana developed under African leadership.¹¹⁹ The resulting

¹¹⁴ FTC, Faith Tabernacle Congregation to pastors of Faith Tabernacle, 29 Oct. 1925; Presiding Elder George W. Foster to correspondence of Faith Tabernacle, 4 Dec. 1925.

¹¹⁵ 'Testimony of Pastor A. Clark and family', *First Century Gospel*, 1:9 (Oct. 1926), 6.

¹¹⁶ By 2005, Faith Tabernacle claimed only 314 members in Ghana. J. I. Okoro, *Report on the International Presiding Elder of Faith Tabernacle Congregation: Pastor Kenneth W. Yeager's Third Visit to Africa (Nigeria and Ghana)* (Aba, 2005), 29–30.

¹¹⁷ In early 1952, one year before parting company with Faith Tabernacle, Nkansah claimed to have 2,000 people attending his services in Anyinam. FTC, CN, James K. Nkansah to Walter Troutman, 16 Jan. 1952.

¹¹⁸ Cessou, 'Une religion nouvelle', 6.

¹¹⁹ Without any missionaries present, Ghanaian pastors and branch leaders managed the church locally, although norms of behavior were maintained through mutual watching, with the wrongdoings of leaders or members reported to Philadelphia. For a detailed discussion of mutual watching among the Basel missionaries in Ghana, see J. Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828–1917* (Grand Rapids, 2003), 110–15.

correspondence and documentation exchanged between that leadership and church officials in the United States enabled Ghanaian branches of Faith Tabernacle to pass the colonial state's scrutiny at a time when officials were outlawing healing cults.

Second, as Karin Barber has argued, in colonial Africa the attainment of literacy was an avenue through which many people sought to improve their social status.¹²⁰ In Ghana, such efforts at self-improvement took place through the engagement of English texts by both secular literary societies and evangelical Christian churches such as Faith Tabernacle.¹²¹ Unconcerned with secular notions of civilization, Faith Tabernacle strove to access the 'Full Gospel' as practiced by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, an enchanted Christianity that included healing of physical, social, and supernatural maladies. Whereas literary societies contributed to new forms of civic organization across sub-Saharan Africa, Faith Tabernacle became the seedbed of Pentecostalism in Ghana.

After Ambrose Clark's untimely departure in late 1925, many Faith Tabernacle branches, leaders, supporters, and affiliates – drawn at this time to the doctrine of Baptism in the Holy Spirit – formed the first Pentecostal churches in Ghana in the 1930s.¹²² In 1924, a Faith Tabernacle member near Keta had asked Ambrose Clark about the 'tongues movement'.¹²³ In 1925, another member reported Pentecostal groups in Agona and Fante.¹²⁴ By 1928, Peter Anim was reading the periodical of the Apostolic Faith and becoming interested in this American-based Pentecostal church.¹²⁵ By June 1930, he and his congregation had fully embraced the Pentecostal movement.¹²⁶ A year later, he was visited by missionaries from the British-based Apostolic Church and, in 1935, Anim and much of his substantial following joined this Pentecostal church.¹²⁷

The union between Anim and the Apostolic Church was short lived. By the middle of 1938, the Apostolic Church in Ghana had split over a theological issue. One side, led by Anim in Asamankese, abstained from all forms of medicine, while the other, led by the British missionary James McKeown in

¹²⁰ K. Barber, 'Introduction: hidden innovators in Africa', in K. Barber (ed.), *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington 2006), 5 and 13–18.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 12; Newell, *Literary Culture*, 27–52.

¹²² Anim, *History*, 3–4. There is some evidence that Pentecostal influences existed in Ghana before the 1920s and outside of Faith Tabernacle circles. For instance, in 1910 the British Pentecostal periodical *Confidence* was distributed in Ghana (*Confidence*, 3:12 (Dec. 1910), 284). Also, a Liberian Pentecostal from Cape Palmas named Jasper K. Toe reported evangelizing in Ghana during 1918 in the midst of the influenza pandemic. 'How missions pay', *The Latter Rain Evangel*, 11:7 (Apr. 1919), 13.

¹²³ FTC, CN, Albert V. C. Nanevie to Ambrose Clark, 17 Nov. 1924. Literature condemning Pentecostalism or the 'tongues movement' had been circulating within Faith Tabernacle circles in Ghana since at least the mid-1920s. FTC, CN, A. M. Boateng to Ambrose Clark, 7 Feb. 1925.

¹²⁴ FTC, CN, Jacob R. Mensah to Ambrose Clark, 8 May 1925.

¹²⁵ Anim, *History*, 3. This was probably the Apostolic Faith Mission from Portland, Oregon, founded by Florence Louise Crawford in 1908.

¹²⁶ FTC, CN, E. Edward Brown to Edwin Winterborne, 26 Jan. 1931. On 4 Aug. 1930, Pastor Brown from Accra revoked Peter Anim's Faith Tabernacle credentials and mailed them back to Philadelphia.

¹²⁷ Anim, *History*, 4 and 6–7.

Winneba, incorporated biomedicine.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the two major nodes of the Faith Tabernacle network in the 1920s had become the two major Pentecostal nodes in the 1930s, and Pentecostalism continued to advance in Ghana among former Faith Tabernacle leaders, congregants, and affiliates.¹²⁹

A focus on suffering and a ritual repertoire of Biblically based healing methods was maintained in the transition from Faith Tabernacle to Pentecostalism in Ghana. This healing-centered Christianity continued to thrive in the country after the 1930s. By the 1940s, the success of Faith Tabernacle's Pentecostal branches was so significant that healing cults such as *Kunde* – which became popular owing to the same social, political, and economic forces that led to the rise of Faith Tabernacle – began to wane in southern Ghana.¹³⁰ Beginning in the 1960s, spiritual healing practices became integrated into mainstream churches among Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Evangelical Presbyterians, Methodists, and Presbyterians.¹³¹ At the turn of the twenty-first century, healing has remained a central practice within Ghanaian Christianity and a general feature of African Christianity, distinguishing it from other regional Christianities.¹³² This process began systematically in Ghana with the Faith Tabernacle community in 1918.

¹²⁸ Y. Bredwa-Mensah, 'The church of Pentecost in retrospect: 1937–1960', in *James McKeown Memorial Lectures* (Accra, 2004), 11.

¹²⁹ This supports Maxwell's argument that the key to Pentecostalism's rapid global advance was the evangelical networks previously established. D. Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Oxford, 2006), 35.

¹³⁰ Parker, 'Witchcraft', 393–4. While healing-centered Christianity is much more dominant today in Ghana, healing cults have not disappeared. For a thorough account of an active healing shrine in Asante, see T. C. McCaskie, 'Akwantemfi – "in mid-journey": an Asante shrine today and its clients', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 38 (2008), 57–80.

¹³¹ C. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of the Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer, 2002).

¹³² H. Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, 1995), 254–5.