

# THE STAR OF ZION

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## Crusading For African Redemption As Ashanti Sees Us.

Bishop C. C. Alleyne

The disciples were called "Christians" first at Antioch. The term, no doubt, was coined in the midst of derision and reproach. The Oxford band of pious young men was designated "Methodists" by way of contemptuous tolerance. In both cases the appellations were ennobled and glorified by the subsequent history of those whose distinctive characteristics were thus epitomized.

All through the Gold Coast Colony our Church is referred to as Zion. But in the country of the Ashanti they call it ADZAYEW—The Unfortunate Church. When you know the African; when you have looked into his sensitive soul; when you have seen how he hates opprobrium, and shrinks from sarcasm, you will realize what an indignity was thus heaped upon him.

If there is anything which causes the African to wince it is ridicule. Do anything to the proud black man but abuse him. Reproach and derision his soul abhors. Therefore to call his Church ADZAYEW was to pillory him in infamy. And to add to the bitterness of it they had begun to feel that they were unfortunate. The reproaches of their tormentors fell on self-tortured souls, thus adding to the hopelessness of their situation.

In this country the worth of everything—even a Mission—is estimated by comparison. If the other Mission has a clearer sounding bell, a better-toned organ, a more elaborately equipped school, a more up-to-date church building, the less pretentious Mission at once becomes anathema.

To the unthinking the Mission with an important Bishop, or an European Superintendent out-ranks the one not so equipped. From nearly all of these angles Zion suffered by comparison, and correspondingly lost prestige. It somehow inhaled in the subconsciousness of the members and preachers alike that the astute Ashanti had rightly appraised the Church of Varick and Small when they designated it—the unfortunate Church.

This factor entered into the situation which precipitated the threatened withdrawal. Mansu is the political centre of a section in which we have a very large circuit. These churches were organized by the Conference path-finder, Rev. Isaac Sackey. One of the churches of this group severed its connection with the West Gold Coast Conference and secured admission into the Wesleyan Methodist Denomination. Those of the Zion group saw the seceding organization flourish and grow strong under the paternal care of the Wesleyan conference while they remained weak and struggling.

At the Annual Conference of 1924 the Mansu organization threw down the gauntlet. They resolved that if nothing could be done to bring about the consummation of their long deferred hopes they could do no other than seek help elsewhere. Not only was their decision irrevocable, but other delegates chorused, "we also go with thee." A panic then ensued. The leaders already feeling cast down and forsaken could not stem the tide. The matter was submitted to a vote and the conference unanimously declared in favor of withdrawal. For a few months chaos prevailed and the sarcastic Ashanti triumphed. Zion was truly ADZAYEW—the unfortunate Church.

Our failure to take communications from the mission field seriously came near costing us the labor of a quarter of a century. Letters were ignored, cables went unanswered and this was like adding insult to injury.

I well know that exceptions will

be taken to the tenor of this article. Silence perhaps would be golden; but, too much has this policy been followed. And too dearly has our Zion paid for this false economy and criminal negligence. It should be told in Gath and published in the streets of Askalon that Zion missionaries, when thousands of miles from home, in however desperate a situation, seldom ever get a reply to their most urgent communications.

To get the point of view of those from the centre of home activities, when thus left severely alone, one must sit down among them. To understand how an African-born African regards an unanswered letter one must live for a while in this land of exactions and exactness. In the matter of regard for obligations and courteous treatment the African is without a peer. He needs no book of etiquette, no lectures on "good form." His native customs supply him with a code which will stand the acid test.

If you do Mr. African a favor in his native heath, or send him a gift, he does not say thank you in a perfunctory way and let the matter drop. Next day he presents himself, or failing to do so, sends a letter profusely thanking you for your kindness. Prospective visitors take notice; the day after is the occasion for elaborate thanksgiving.

A younger man never sits in the presence of his senior unless he is told to do so. He cannot address him without changing the position of his native cloth. A man of importance is never approached save through an intermediary.

In a country of such exactions failure to answer a communication is an unpardonable slight. A promise here is an obligation. If you sign your name to a subscription list failure to pay is a misdemeanor and the holder of the promise can recover in a law court. Thus promises are bona fide debts, and appropriations are collectable.

If judged by African standards there may be justification for the latitude taken by the Ashanti when he changed our denominational patronymic from Zion to ADZAYEW. Quittah, Gold Coast West Africa.

April 17, 1925.

### Ashes From Ashanti.

The Saturday before our arrival at Kumasi a young man died suddenly. There is always something uncanny about sudden death in Africa. Everybody seems to fall under the spell of an undefined dread. The European doctor evidently at his wit's end, pronounced this a case of alcoholic poisoning. Albeit, no autopsy was performed, and the deceased had never been on friendly terms with King Alcohol.

### The Funeral Custom.

By some strange stroke of fate we were domiciled in the Big House of the Compound where the death occurred, and the funeral custom was being observed. On the eighth night after the demise the wake reached its culminating point. Two choirs from the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches respectively, gathered to participate in the musical features of the strange programme.

The family of the decedent is seated in the yard. They are surrounded by their pagan friends and acquaintances. The choirs flank these and simultaneously engage in singing hymns of different tunes. The result is confusion rather than concordance.

As it nears midnight they serve

drinks; and from then until gray dawn the noise becomes nauseous. About five o'clock in the morning the non-Christian clans take their turn at noise-making. They beat native drums and dance wildly as if in ecstatic glee. An hour later the beating of the drums ceases; the complicated, fantastic movements are discontinued.

The members of the family who were appointed to keep watch around the bed on which the death occurred, now join those in the yard. They pour rum on the ground as a libation, and then break out in weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is prolonged moaning. Africa is weeping for a departed son; and will not be comforted, because he is now numbered among the inhabitants of the silent city of the dead. Women beat their breasts in a paroxysm of grief. They wend their way through the streets, under the influence of uncontrollable emotion. Pandemonium has a respite; the orgy is deferred to a more appropriate season.

### "It Was a Stranger."

At this stage I was compelled to leave for Bompata, and as a consequence missed the closing scene of the drama. It was at Bompata that the Omanhene in reply to my address said: "Your speech made us both happy and sad. To think that you are our kith and kin, and we had to wait until you are now an old man before being privileged to see you." He also exhorted me to bring all the American Negroes with me on my return.

Of Africa the Master will never say, "I was a stranger and ye took me not in; I was hungry and ye did not give me to eat." According to the native custom a stranger must always be received, given something to eat and drink, and escorted to his next stop. There are certain things that are given you and they have each certain significance. So at Bompata, as everywhere I went, I was presented a sheep, one hundred and forty eggs, bananas and some coconuts. The other sheep were willing sacrifices, hence they were led to the slaughter. But the Bompata sheep decided that a "scapegoat" was needed. Accordingly he broke the rope, jumped out of the

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## Church Congress in Egypt.

A dispatch from Cairo says that the Catholic Congress which met at that city last Sunday and has continued during the past week was the first ever held in Egypt. There is a peculiar interest in this announcement when it is remembered that Egypt was the scene of the labors of St. Mark, that Christianity came to the country in the first century and the Church was well established there by the middle of the second century. Egypt was one of the earliest strongholds of Christianity, but at the same time it was the field of intense struggles on doctrinal points and the place of origin of many sects and schismatic churches that have had an important part in the religious history of the world.

The congress thus met in a land rich in the history and traditions of early Christianity. The wise men of Alexandria one of the intellectual centers of the known world at the beginning of the Christian era, eagerly seized upon the new faith which had come to take the place of Greek philosophy and the decadent religions of the Egyptians. From them Christianity received the impetus that sent it along the north coast of Africa to raise up later St. Augustine in Numidia the modern Tunisia; Catherine, who surrendered her life for her belief, and the great

## Modern Woman Called a Menace.

The woman who will not bear children is a menace to the civilization of the English-speaking race, and unless marriage customs which virtually enforce maternity upon unwilling women are not revived the posterity of English-speaking peoples is doomed to obscurity.

The "modern" woman will undoubtedly question this statement and assert woman's right to social as well as political equality with the opposite sex, but the modern woman is woefully wrong, according to R. H. Towner, who, in his latest book—the "Philosophy of Civilization"—comes forward to prove that she is wrong.

Mr. Towner goes further. He declares that the emancipation of women, heralded as an evidence of the progress of our own national civilization, is just another indication of our national decline. The author's evidence took the greater part of a lifetime to compile and is presented in two volumes.

The first thing that marked the decline of every great civilization in history, he declares, was the emancipation of women. "Isaiah," he says, "speaking with prophetic voice, told Israel that because women ruled over them, and the daughters of Zion are haughty, 'thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.'"

### How Israel Fell.

The fall of Israel came about with the prophecy. The same results followed the rise to independence of the women of Athens and Rome, according to the author.

"Women of augmented nervous organizations became rebellious, independent and proud, refused the rule of fathers and husbands, made and unmade their own marriages, accepted or rejected maternity according to their own desires, substracted at will their own virtues from posterity."

It is the women of higher nervous organizations, Mr. Towner emphasizes throughout his work, upon whom the production of genius is dependent, and it is this type of woman who is the first to seek a means of escape from the duties of wifehood.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, at the beginning of the Renaissance, Mr. Towner states, women of the Italian bourgeois were "humble and obedient, were given in marriage by paternal command, and made fruitful by their husbands' rule." In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries all this was changed, women of augmented nervous organizations formed clubs and academies, wifely obedience was vulgar and unfashionable, women demanded an equal education, and asserted equal rights and privileges, and an equal independence with men.

The decline of Italian genius and the destruction of Italian liberty followed, exactly as from a like cause

defender of Christianity, Alexander, who worked for its extension to every part of the Mediterranean littoral.

In Egypt, too, the war waged bitterly over Nestorianism and Monophysitism, now forgotten by the laymen and remembered by the clergy principally as disputations filed away in the archives of the Church. But these doctrinal points, their forerunners and kindred dogmas, had much to do with the schisms and secessions from the Church which have been described as so numerous that the names of many of them are not even known to-day. The most important of the secessionist bodies in Egypt was that forming the Coptic Church, which has still a strong hold on the native Egyptian population.

Many of the early converts to Christianity left Egypt and as mis-

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Athenian genius and liberty had declined twenty centuries earlier."

The same causes dominated the downfall of France and Spain, Mr. Towner points out, although in France the change in women occurred only among the women of the nobility, and it was this class that was overthrown.

"During the same period," writes Mr. Towner, "the virtues of humility, obedience, self-sacrifice displayed by the women of England, in contrast to those of the Continent, astonished Stendhal and Taine, and genius rose in England as it declined in the Continental groups."

Thus, Mr. Towner concludes, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, not only by Israel, but by each succeeding group. The author declares that had an Isaiah in the second century of the Christian era, observed the differences between pagan and Christian women, he would have correctly prophesied that Christians would soon seize the empire from the pagans. Similarly, had he noticed the contrast drawn by Tacitus between women of civilized Rome and barbarian Germany, he could have easily predicted the triumph of Germany over Rome.

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## Where Are The General Conference Minutes?

Geo. C. Scurlock, Att'y at Law.

Editor of the Star:

It may not be generally known, but one of the prime objects of the Laymen's Association of the A. M. E. Zion church in the Philadelphia and Baltimore Conference, is to support in every way possible, the Bishops and pastors in the advancement and spread of our Zion, material and spiritual.

Further, that there be a better working understanding between the clergy and the laity. With such a large array of intelligent and capable laity, there is no reason why all the burden of the business of the General Church should be borne by the clergy. It does not speak well for us as a great Church, that the business should lag so far behind. What the laity want to know is why we get no financial reports of the doings of the Connection.

For the past eight (8) years we have not had the minutes of the General Conference. This too in the face of the fact that there are among the laity, compilers, editors and others that are competent to get out the literature of the Church promptly and avoid these long delays.

If there was a clearer understanding among the people as to the Budget System and fiscal policy of the Church, there would be less complaint, criticism and fault-finding as to assessments, etc.

When the laity finds itself and becomes fully aroused as to its rights, we may look for a change for the better.

The fact of the matter is, the laity in Zion has yet to learn that ours as a religious organization, is a representative body in which all power is derived from the people and that taxation and representation must go together. Even in this great republic of ours in which the people are supposed to rule, we hear of such terms of autocracy and bossism. In the Church of God there should not be the slightest semblance of these terms. We fear, however, there is some ground for the charge.

At a meeting of the Laymen's Association recently in this City, the

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