

CHRISTIAN ABRAHAM ACKAH OF KIKAM AND THE ROOTS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN GHANA, 1903-1912.

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One of the priceless indigenous gifts our great and loving God Kwaame, the Creator God of Saturday, gave to and blessed Ghana with in the opening years of the twentieth century was Christian Abraham Ackah of Kikam in Nzimaland in the Western Region of modern Ghana, West Africa. In his providential short life of less than three decades, C. A. Ackah of Kikam pioneered Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Christian Education with a zeal, devotion, and commitment that could not have originated from any other source, power, or force but God Kwaame Himself, the God his people in Ghana, the Akans, know as Onyamee Tweadumpon Kwaame, the God Whose appropriate day for His worship is Saturday, the seventh-day of the Akan week of seven days.<sup>1</sup> Christian Abraham Ackah of Kikam died in his late twenties, about 28 or 29, in Britain on Thursday, April 25, 1912 of “acute pulmonary tuberculosis exhaustion”, if his own testimony to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists headquarters in Washington, DC, USA in October, 1908 that “I am 24 years of age” is taken as a historical fact of his life on this earth.<sup>2</sup> That information on his age in 1908 points to 1883 or 1884 as the year of his birth. Short and tragic as his life was, C. A. Ackah’s energy and drives for baby Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana in the early days of its growth and development for the business of God Kwaame in that country were, nonetheless, exemplary, dynamic, and fruitful to the glory and honor of God and for the future of that Christian faith, particularly in relation to formal Christian education and Christ’s gospel commission to all His followers from the days of His earthly sojourn to His Second Coming, as recorded in Mathew 28:18-20.

For Christian Abraham Ackah, formal and official Seventh-day Adventism began when he was a young man, only about nineteen or twenty, in 1903. He made mention of this fact in a letter he sent from Cape Coast, Ghana to the General Conference of SDA headquarters in the United States that appeared in the Adventist magazine, *Review and*

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<sup>1</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Onyamee Kwaame: The Akan God of Saturday*, Accra: Advent Press, 1990, (henceforth abbreviated K. Owusu-Mensa, *Onyamee Kwaame*) Chapters 2 and 5. J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1968 (Originally published in 1944), p. 43. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, “The Akan Saturday God Heritage in Ghana”, *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, or *JATA*, Volume I, Number I, November, 1995, pp.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Abraham Ackah to the Mission Board, October 17, 1908, General Conference of SDA, Department of Archives and Statistics (GCA), File No. 21 (Incoming Letters: Foreign or ILF), 1908-A, p. 5. See also the following books by Kofi Owusu-Mensa: *Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana*, New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1993, p. 71; *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History*, Accra: Advent Press, 2005, p. 92; *Thirty Years of Valley View University 1979 To 2009*, Accra: Advent Press, 2010, p. 42.

*Herald*, of July, 1908. “ I was known by the public, “he noted, “as a Sabbath keeper in the year 1903, when Bro James M. Hyatt and his wife were in town [Cape Coast]; but now I am known by individuals as a minister while I am not.”<sup>3</sup> Before his conversion to Seventh-day Adventism in 1903, C. A. Ackah was known at Cape Coast and his native home of Kikam as a vivacious and enterprising young businessman in his own right, engaged in the buying and selling of various kinds of merchandise along the coast of the Gold Coast (now modern Ghana) in particular and West Africa generally. He was one of a group of dynamic, assiduous, and enterprising men like Prince Owusu-Ansa of Asante and William Dawson of Gomoa Fetteh and Francis Dolphijn of Apam, both in the coastal Fanteland of Ghana, who, that is, Dawson and Dolphijn, were also bona fide indigenous Seventh-day Adventist pioneers in Ghana, deeply involved in commercial activities and who contemporary observers and writers generally referred to as “merchant princes.”<sup>4</sup> Ackah’s conversion to Seventh-day Adventism in 1903, however, completely changed him, connecting him tightly, firmly, and devotedly more to his new faith in the worship of the God of the true Sabbath, Saturday, than his former life of running around and giving more and more of his time and attention to commercial activities. His love for mammon grew colder while that for God Kwaame and His cause on earth correspondingly grew warmer and deeper in subsequent years, following Christ Jesus’ counsel and warning to His followers (Matthew 6:24 and 33).

Right from the waters of his baptism as a Seventh-day Adventist believer in his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, C. A. Ackah of Kikam fixed his mind and key ambitions on the business of making the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana one of the top Christian denominations or missions in the country and, hopefully, one day rising up to become its first ordained presiding minister.<sup>5</sup> He was candid with his Adventist brethren in America on this holy ambition he had for himself in the future Seventh-day Adventism he was determined to help build up in Ghana, making no apologies for any notions or questions of overweening ambitions about him that might be running loose in some people’s minds. This personal role he envisaged for himself in the future Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana he had in mind, C. A. Ackah spelt out clearly, boldly, and frankly before the brethren in America in no mincing words. “I am here to put before you”, he addressed the General Conference of SDA leaders in Washington, DC, USA, “that I like to be trained up and baptized as a minister for the Gold Coast Mission Schools and Churches after our school

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<sup>3</sup> C. A. Ackah to the General Conference, July 8, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, p. 2. See also Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana* (henceforth abbreviated K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*), p. 68 and Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History* (henceforth cited as K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism or Ghana SDA*), pp. 92-94.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews with Pastor Solomon K. Essel, Agona-Swedru, Ghana, July 9, 1980 and Nana Kweku Abandoh, Apam, Ghana, August 2, 1982. Pastor Essel and Nana Abandoh, were respectively a relation of William Dawson and a direct grandson of Francis Dolphijn. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, “Prince Owusu-Ansa and Asante-British Diplomacy, 1841-1884.”, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, May, 1974, pp. 256-262 and K. Owusu-Mensa, “Prince Owusu-Ansa of Asante, 1823-1884”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 9, No. 3, December, 1978, pp. 23-44.

<sup>5</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 68. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 95.

building at Kickam, which will be completely built before September. The house is built at my own expenses... I shall ask you to pray for your sinful brother always.”<sup>6</sup>

Ackah’s words in this communication to the General Conference in 1908, encapsulated in expressions like “to be trained up”, “Gold Coast Mission Schools and Churches”, and “after our school building at Kickam,” in a nutshell, summarized the educational mind-set and pioneering ambitions in Ghana Adventist Christian Education he subsequently lived and died for in his short life span on this earth for his God Kwaame, people, and country. During the tender years of baby Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana in the 1880s, 1890s, and the first decade of the twentieth century, Apam and Cape Coast, both in Ghana’s Fanteland, were the first and second host towns in succession for the new Christian mission.<sup>7</sup> But from about 1908, Cape Coast began yielding place, that enviable position as host-town of baby Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana, to Kikam in the far west of coastal Ghana in Nzimaland, Christian Abraham Ackah’s native home or hometown. In those days, Kikam was a typical Nzima coastal town, famous for its coconut and fishing industries, and not much else, but young, dynamic, and enterprising Christian Abraham Ackah, set out to change that somber atmosphere and image of his native town for God Kwaame and Seventh-day Adventism. With “assiduity accomplishes wonders” as his motto, Ackah was determined to make Kikam a showpiece and a model Seventh-day Adventist community in Ghana and, for him, Christian Education was the key thing for the realization of his dreams and ambitions for his God Kwaame, the God of Saturday.<sup>8</sup>

Before he launched fully into his new vision for Christian Education for his church and folks in Ghana in the opening years of the twentieth century, C. A. Ackah decided to be a student himself and get taught first by his African-American mentor, James Hyatt who, most probably, converted him to Seventh-day Adventism at Cape Coast about 1903. James M. Hyatt, an early and the first African-American SDA missionary to Ghana from America, first arrived at Cape Coast, Ghana in March, 1903, together with his wife, Marion.<sup>9</sup> At the vivacious age of about twenty in that year, C. A. Ackah was evidently restless for more education and adventure and studied for some time under James Hyatt who taught him the Bible and related subjects.<sup>10</sup> When the Hyatts left Cape Coast, Ghana in mid-1905, about June or July, after more than two years of continuous service to their God and church, for a relocation to Freetown in Sierra Leone, also in West Africa, C. A. Ackah became a key SDA leader in Ghana, holding the fort for God Kwaame there, in collaboration with his colleague indigenous African or Ghanaian Adventist brother, Samuel Duncan Morgue, a Cape Coast native of pure Fante blood.”<sup>11</sup> This early Adventist convert of Cape Coast, Duncan Morgue,

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<sup>6</sup> C. A. Ackah to the General Conference, July 8, 1908, GCA File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, pp. 2-3. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p.68 and K. Owusu – Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Onyamee Kwaame*, pp. 45-55 and K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, pp. 35-44.

<sup>9</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, pp. 66-67. See also the same author’s *Ghana SDA*, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*. See also interviews with Mr. Albert Embrah Clarke-Williams and Mrs. Joahana DeGraft, Cape Coast, Ghana, July 16, 1978. Mrs. De Graft was an aunt of Mr. Clarke-Williams who, in turn, was a nephew of Mr. Samuel K. Duncan Morgue (Sometimes also written as

switched over from his childhood Anglicanism to Seventh-day Adventism in about 1905 and played a historic and important role in Adventist history in West Africa when in 1914 he served as one of the official SDA pioneer missionaries, led by David Babcock, an American, who were commissioned by the church to begin the Adventist work formally and officially in Nigeria.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Samuel Duncan Morgue, C. A. Ackah chose to stay on at home in Ghana and implement his educational ambitions and dreams for baby Seventh-day Adventism in his own country. He started some type of Adventist school at Cape Coast after James Hyatt and his wife Marion were gone. This Ackah Adventist School formally and officially took off or first opened its doors to the folks at Cape Coast in February, 1907. His official report to the General Conference of SDA leaders in America on this beginning Ackah Adventist School in Ghana was terse but precise: "I put up School work here since 9<sup>th</sup> February 1907; and the work is going successfully, I mean Cape Coast here but not Kickam."<sup>13</sup>

But Christian Abraham Ackah's Christian educational ambitions for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana were not designed to end at Cape Coast only. That Fante town of much of his trading and commercial activities, which was also the home of his wife, was taken to be only the beginning point of his grandiose schemes of making his Nzima hometown, Kikam, the epicenter and cynosure of vibrant Adventist Christian Education, training up and grooming young people, particularly males, for SDA educational and evangelistic strides and drives throughout Ghana or at least many areas in the country, beyond Fanteland and Nzimaland. That is what precisely happened in subsequent decades when Kikam became the production center of Adventist teacher-evangelists from Nzimaland who constituted the key Ghanaian group that, as it were, essentially planted Seventh-day Adventism in interior Ghana, particularly Asante, during the opening decades of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Decades before this actually happened, C. A. Ackah had expressed his confidence, bothering on almost a prophecy, that "Kickam will be the topmost of our works in the Gold Coast after our School Building which is built at my own expenses. I shall be very much obliged if the General Conference sends me Map of Asia and map of America for our School works at Cape Coast and Kickam."<sup>15</sup>

Before C. A. Ackah could solidify his educational ambitions and dreams at Kikam, his Nzima hometown, however, he had to do some good home-groundings of his Seventh-day Adventist faith there itself. Transplanting fully his Cape Coast Ackah Adventist School to Kikam required Adventist members or believers there who would not only welcome their native son and his plans and hopes for them, but who would also commit themselves properly to his ambitions, dreams, and plans and actively work with him and help him

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Samuel Morgue Duncan) and K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 68, as well as K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, pp.94 and 124. See also William H. Lewis, "True Adventures in Africa. A Story of the pioneer days of the Advent Movement in Sierra Leone and Ghana, West Africa", (1917), an unpublished manuscript at the Heritage Room, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> C. A. Ackah to the General Conference, July 8, 1908, GCA. File No. 21 ILF, 1908-A, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, chapters six through ten (6-10).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95. See also C.A. Ackah to the General Conference, July 8, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, p. 2.

succeed for the good of their town and Nzimaland as a whole, as well as for the growth, development, and progress of Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana.

Ackah also had to work with David Caldwell Babcock, the new General Conference appointee to head the SDA work in West Africa, who arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, then headquarters of the SDA work in West Africa, in August, 1905 to take-over the leadership role there from the interim caretaker, veteran James Hyatt. Babcock, a veteran Adventist pastor and a Caucasian American southerner, aged 51 at the time, was to work with Ackah and his Ghanaian folks and some other foreign SDA workers in Ghana for the next six years until 1911 when Ackah left Ghana for Britain, intending to reach America and dialogue with the General Conference of SDA leaders in Washington, DC on the SDA work in West Africa generally, but in Ghana particularly. Ackah, evidently, never reached America as he had hoped and planned for, prematurely dying in Britain the following year, 1912.<sup>16</sup>

During the six years Babcock was with Ackah in West Africa, 1905-1911, the Ghanaian pioneer Adventist educationist worked hard around the clock tirelessly to firstly ground Seventh-day Adventism firmly and strongly in this native Nzima hometown of Kikam and secondly build up a strong and viable Adventist educational base there as well. Ackah did not live long enough to realize his dream of one day becoming the first ordained Adventist minister in Ghana, but in some three years from 1908 to 1911 he helped build up a solid and lasting vibrant SDA base in his native town of Kikam, ripples from which later in turn helped solidify and consolidate Seventh-day Adventism in many other areas in Ghana, particularly Asante.<sup>17</sup> Kikam, in Ackah's schemes and dreams was going to be transformed from a mere coconut and fishing Nzima coastal town to an Adventist Home of Christian Education that would serve as a training ground for young people destined to lead out and work for Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana in both his days and in the distant future, and that exactly is what happened.

From June to October, 1908, C. A. Ackah launched a four-month all-out crash evangelistic campaign in this darling Kikam, designed to simultaneously begin a church-company and a school for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in that town, effectively and successfully exploiting his native Akan traditions and belief of the Creator God of Saturday in Ghana to win many of this folks at Kikam for the church.<sup>18</sup> Ackah's persuasive and convincing analysis of the truth, coupled with his transparent candidness and sincerity, love, and concern for the spiritual growth of his people in the things of their God Kwaame, paid off well and handsomely, carrying a number of his early Kikam converts into the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Numbered among these pioneer Ackah SDA converts at Kikam were people like Ackah Kwaame, J. Crosby Essien, Kwesi Yambuam (or Kwesi Nyameeboa), Moses E. Andoh, Robert Essien, Mary Ackah, Moses Amoo, Isaac Ayiem Ansah, and Wilson Cobbinah.<sup>19</sup> When C. A. Ackah unearthed his plans to his people and converts about starting an SDA school at Kikam during the evangelistic crusade, he was amazed and overwhelmed with joy to receive a cash gift of twenty-five pounds (£25.00) from a Kikam fetish priestess,

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<sup>16</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 71. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, pp.119 and 126.

<sup>17</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Onyamee Kwaame*, pp. 29-53.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem.* See also interviews with Pastors J. M. Arloo and I. A. Benson, Kikam, Ghana, July 15, 1978.

Komfo Abrima, mother of one of his first converts, Ackah Kwaame, which the lady wanted used as salary for the first teacher to be hired for the planned school when it got started.<sup>20</sup> Ackah reported to the SDA General Conference leaders in America that by late October, 1908 a strong team of thirty-six (36) Adventist believers or members was firmly grounded at this native Kikam.<sup>21</sup>

Concurrent with his Kikam strides and drives for Seventh-day Adventism in those early days of the twentieth century were C. A. Ackah's dreams, plans, and efforts to win many more of his Nzima people for his church. All Nzimaland or "Appollonia", an unsavory or uncomplimentary name-tag given to that section of Ghana by earlier Roman Catholic missionaries and translated "the land or home of the devil" because the Saturday God traditionalist people there had rejected these Roman Catholic "Sunday god" preachers, indeed was Ackah's dream for Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>22</sup> Ackah broadened out his crusading outreaches for Adventism beyond his native Kikam, penetrating other Nzima towns like Axim, the traditional Nzima capital or chief coastal town, and Anyinassi where, enlivening the spirits of his brethren in America in Adventist prospects in Ghana with a letter in July, 1908, Ackah reported that, "last month, I organized a Sabbath-school at Anyinassi headed by Bro. A. B. Ankatsie, and I am sure I shall open a school there next year."<sup>23</sup> In his report to the 37<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session in Washington, DC, on June 6, 1909, David C. Babcock also touched on Ackah's labors for Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana, acknowledging his utility and dynamism for God Kwaame's cause and Adventism there: "Brother C. A. Ackah took up the book work at Cape Coast, Gold Coast, and other points, and has disposed \$500 worth of books and other literature. He also held some meeting in his native village, among the Nsimbia people, and reports forty-three Sabbath-keepers."<sup>24</sup>

Ackah's endowed multiple-talent personality was utilized for baby Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana in the early twentieth century in his daily rounds and activities in the literature evangelism ministry, Bible Studies, formal preaching-appointment calls, visits, and invitations, direct evangelistic campaigns and efforts, and appeals to church leaders in America in behalf of the work in Ghana. But his pioneering role in the promotion of Adventist Christian Education for young people for and in the cause of God Kwaame and Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana in its tender years was his strongest point and legacy for the cause, faith, and God he loved, lived, and died for. Almost four decades ago in 1980, the late Pastor William Brandford Ackah, a nephew of the pioneer Adventist educationist, Christian Abraham Ackah of Kikam (c. 1883-1912), emphasized to this writer that he considered C. A. Ackah's "programs of founding schools and training young people for the

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<sup>20</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>21</sup> C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 27, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> C. A. Ackah to The General Conference, July 8, 1908, GCA File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, p. 4

<sup>24</sup> D. C. Babcock, "THE WORK IN WEST AFRICA", *General Conference Bulletin or GCB*, Vol. 6, No. 21, June 7, 1909, p. 352. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, pp. 98-99.

work of God his uncle's special contribution to SDA history in Ghana."<sup>25</sup> Interestingly enough, the education spirit and foundations C. A. Ackah himself inculcated into his baby kids and laid down in his Cape Coast home in the early twentieth century also paid off good dividends for mother Ghana herself in at least one of those baby kids of his in later years in Ghana's public education history. C. A. Ackah's first child, born at Cape Coast in 1908, who later became known as Dr. C. A. Ackah, Jr., became the very first head or principal (the exalted title of "Vice-Chancellor" in Ghana today) of the University College of Cape Coast (today called the University of Cape Coast) during Kwame Nkrumah's presidency in Ghana in the early sixties.<sup>26</sup>

Christian Abraham Ackah's good and progressive works in Ghana for God Kwaame and Seventh-day Adventism finally brought David Babcock to Ghana in October, 1909 from his base in Freetown, Sierra Leone as the director or head of the SDA work in West Africa. Tuesday, October 19, 1909, was a historic and hilarious day for C. A. Ackah and his Nzima folks at Kikam. On that day, for the first time in their history and experience, they witnessed an impressive SDA baptismal ceremony performed by veteran Pastor David Babcock himself right there in that Nzima coastal town, then the indisputable hub of Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana. A number of believers, constituting the Kikam SDA Company, got baptized by David Babcock that day there at Kikam and there and then the pastor formally and officially organized the very first full-fledged Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana, the Kikam SDA Church, with a pioneer foundation group of thirty-four (34) members.<sup>27</sup> Three days later on Friday, October 22, 1909, another baptism of SDA believers in Ghana took place at nearby Axim, the Nzima capital, right at the seashore and on the next day, Sabbath, October 23, 1909, the second Ghanaian SDA Church to be organized in the Church's history, the Axim SDA Church, was similarly formally and officially organized and dedicated to God Kwaame by Pastor David Babcock right there at Axim with seventeen (17) foundation members.<sup>28</sup>

The grand finale of Pastor David Babcock's visit to Ghana in October, 1909 was the deal the pastor struck with pioneer C. A. Ackah on the complete transfer of the Kikam SDA Church and School assets and property from Ackah's personal control, management, and ownership to that of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>29</sup> Both Ackah and Babcock themselves subsequently sent detailed accounts of this mutual agreement on the Ackah-Babcock deal on the Kikam SDA assets and property to the General Conference leaders in Washington, DC. David Babcock was particularly joyous over the deal and spelt out his mood on it clearly in two communication pieces to one of his Adventist friends at the General Conference of SDA headquarters in Washington DC: "I am glad", he said, "to say that I have just returned from the Gold Coast, and have had a settlement with Bro. Ackah,

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Pastor W. B. Ackah, Jr., (1924-1983), Accra, Ghana, July 7, 1980. Pastor W. B. Ackah Jr., was the son of Mr. W. B. Ackah, Snr., a younger brother of Mr. C. A. Ackah, Snr., of Kikam, the pioneer SDA educationist of early twentieth century Ghana.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dr. Christian A. Ackah, Jr., Cape Coast, Ghana, July 16, 1978.

<sup>27</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, p. 110.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* , pp. 110-112.

<sup>29</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 70. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 112. Also for a little pre-history on this see C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 27, 1908, GCA File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, p. 1.

and have taken over the property he has for the Mission, so that all orders will be made through the office at Freetown from this.”<sup>30</sup>

For Christian Abraham Ackah, the history of his total contribution to the growth and development of nascent Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana, especially the educational foundations for the training of young men for service to God Kwaame and mankind he laid from 1907 to 1911, was the thing that consumed him and really mattered. He began well and assiduously at his business and marriage home of Cape Coast in February, 1907 with his Ackah Adventist School for young people, many of them his own age-mates or slightly younger than himself, when he himself was only about 23 or 24. His original business talents, personal dynamism and drive, and visionary insights enabled him to cast his net wider. Having acquired a precious gem, more precious than anything else this world could offer him at his business base at Cape Coast, Seventh-day Adventism and God Kwaame’s message for the redemption of lost mankind, Ackah focused on spreading the word among and sharing the golden treasure with his folks back home in Nzimaland and beyond, and schools were his key vision for the realization of his dreams and hopes for his church and people. The Kikam Ackah Adventist School he started in his native home in September, 1908 for which he initially gave the builders \$ 141.64 for the construction job, followed on after the pattern of the earlier Ackah Adventist School at Cape Coast, but on a broader and grander scale.<sup>31</sup>

Pioneer Adventist or SDA students at Kikam like Solomon Benjamin Essien, J. B. Arthur, and J. W. Quashie were later to become very useful and prominent teacher-evangelists in the SDA cause and mission in Ghana.<sup>32</sup> Teachers who served at the Kikam Ackah Seventh-day Adventist School during its early days included seasoned Ghanaian Adventist leaders and members like J. D. Hayford, Dolphijn (the Adventist pioneer from Apam, Ghana or one of his two sons) J. A. Bonney, an old man from Akwedai in Ahantaland in Ghana won for Adventism from his former Methodism, Samuel Duncan Morgue, and John Kwabena Kaipro Garbrah (c.1882-1962) of Shama, also in Ahantaland in Ghana whose teaching appointment there at Kikam started on September 28, 1908. <sup>33</sup> In his own words, Garbrah paid tribute to the Ghanaian Adventist pioneer educationist, C. A. Ackah, as the one who hired him as a teacher for his Kikam school: “I was employed by Mr. Abraham C. Ackah to teach in Kikam Union School which is now called Seventh-day Adventist Mission School, the real name for that denomination.”<sup>34</sup> John Kwabena Kaipro Garbrah of Shama was himself converted from Methodism to Seventh-day Adventism in 1908 by the veteran

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<sup>30</sup> D.C. Babcock to T. E. Bowen, November 2, 1909, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1909-B, p. 1 and D. C. Babcock to T. E. Bowen, November 28, 1909, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1909 - B, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 27, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, pp. 1 and 2, D. C. Babcock, “WEST COAST AFRICA,” notes in D.C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, November 13, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-B, p. 3, and interview with Pastor I. A. Benson, Kikam, Ghana, July 15, 1978. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 100.

<sup>33</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, pp.100 – 101 and 167. See also “Memoirs of Pastor John Kwabena Kaipro Garbrah (c. 1882 – 1962), a transcription from the original (henceforth cited as Garbrah, “Memoirs”), p. 38. These “Memoirs” were given to this author by Pastor Kofi Garbrah, a son of Pastor John Kwabena Kaipro Garbrah himself, in 1980.

<sup>34</sup> Garbrah, “Memoirs,” p. 38.



Ghanaian Adventist, J. D. Hayford, and later became the first ordained SDA pastor in Ghana in 1921.<sup>35</sup> The Kikam SDA School, right from its birth, was an attractive and a worthwhile enterprise and venture for baby Adventism in Ghana as attendance at the school was good and, as Ackah himself noted, “the students are rushing in everyday.”<sup>36</sup> A four-month intensive work at Kikam under the direction and supervision of C. A. Ackah himself had produced a viable primary school as well as a strong company of Adventist believers. The Kikam SDA School’s schedule of Sunday to Thursday classes was a highly-conscious Sabbath-oriented innovation that highly impressed David Babcock when he got to that Nzima town in October, 1909 and learned of it. Friday was fully devoted to preparations for the Sabbath, the following day, and that Kikam innovation in the SDA School system there was a new lesson and experience which veteran Pastor David Babcock never forgot.<sup>37</sup>

Determined to expand his school system in Nzimaland for Seventh-day Adventism, Ackah reported to his brethren in America in late 1909 that he had opened additional schools there, each costing him £2:7s (two pounds seven shillings) a month.<sup>38</sup> He believed these Ackah SDA Schools in Western Appollonia or Nzimaland were serving as opening wedges into the heartland of his people, converting precious souls for Christ and Seventh-day Adventism and commanding the attention of the leaders of tomorrow.<sup>39</sup> The interesting connection to and historical piece of good news from this observation by Ackah in 1909 is that, in later years, Kwame Nkrumah, an Nzima man himself, who worked with other Ghanaian freedom fighters for the liberation of Ghana from colonial servitude, bondage, and exploitation by European adventurers in the forties and fifties, was once a student at one of these Ackah SDA Schools in Nzimaland, the Axim SDA School. An Adventist teacher, David Nathaniel Doherty (c. 1891 – 1979) who originally came from Sierra Leone but later settled in Winneba, Ghana as a businessman and died there in 1979, taught Nkrumah at the Axim SDA School early in the twentieth century. When Kwame Nkrumah became the leader of Ghana in the late fifties and early sixties after the British exploiters had been booted out in 1957, one key economic enterprise he set up for Ghana was the Black Star Line, a shipping company, owned and operated by the Ghana government itself and, interestingly enough, the very first managing director he appointed to head the company was nobody else but his own old teacher at the Axim SDA School decades before, D. N. Doherty of Winneba.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mrs. Anna Garbrah, widow of Pastor J. K. Garbrah, Shama, Ghana, July 14, 1978. At the time of this interview, Mrs. Garbrah was about 90 years old. See also D.C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, November 13, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF 1908-B, p. 4, Garbrah, “Memoirs”, p. 74, and K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 172.

<sup>36</sup> C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 27, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, pp. 1-3. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 101.

<sup>37</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 110.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101. See also C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 5, 1909, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1909-A, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Mr. David Nathaniel Doherty (c. 1891 -1979), Winneba, Ghana, July 16, 1978. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, pp. 113 and 125 and K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 70.

Ackah's correspondence with his Adventist brethren in America did not go to the General Conference leaders alone. He broadened out to other Adventist establishments like the Review and Herald Publishing Association, publishers of the *Review and Herald*, an Adventist magazine, also there at the Washington DC headquarters of the General Conference, for the needs of the church at this home, Ghana, West Africa. On the same day C. A. Ackah wrote his first two letters to the General Conference, introducing himself, hopes, and plans for Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana, July 8, 1908, for example, he sent similar letters with a few more detailed information to the *Review* management. Ackah emphasized that, encouraging letters and shipments of books and other school and missionary supplies from the United States to him in Ghana were crucial for the progress of the SDA Church and work at Cape Coast and Kikam and pleaded with the *Review* leaders to send him many Adventist books and school materials like Ellen White books, hymnals, dictionaries, maps and law and prophetic charts, listed on a long sheet, for whose payment he promised immediate settlement upon their receipt.<sup>41</sup> C. A. Ackah, in this same letter to the *Review* folks in America, reiterated his desire "to be baptized as a minister" of the SDA Church in Ghana, although he did not know how this ordination or baptism would come about.<sup>42</sup> Concluding his letter to the brethren of the *Review*, ambitious and visionary Ackah expressed his desire to reach America itself and present his plans personally and directly to the General Conference leadership, saying, "I should like to see you all in the United States of America when your annual Conference calls."<sup>43</sup>

Ackah kept in touch with Pastor David Babcock in Sierra Leone, regularly and importunately inviting him to visit him in Ghana and help him ground his school and church works for Seventh-day Adventism there more firmly but the old pastor in Sierra Leone evidently could not get to Ghana as readily and as frequently as young Ackah hoped or expected of him, as other issues also occupied his attention and took up some of his precious time for his Master's work in West Africa and beyond. Ackah sometimes got troubled over and frustrated with this unavoidable Babcock delinquency and verbalized it in some of the documents he left for his church and posterity, fearing the possible falling-apart of his SDA companies and schools in Nzimaland, Ghana. At one time he reached the General Conference Mission Board in America with a letter saying, "After the General Conference (May 13 to June 6), Elder Babcock of Freetown, Sierra Leone, promised to visit my established schools and baptize about forty two companies raised up also; but during last week, he wrote again that he would visit us but not now. And through this, most of these companies who had prepared to be baptized, are now scattering because of disappointment. They are not running away from the Sabbath though, but to go out and find some few pence to look after their children."<sup>44</sup>

Ackah urgently needed reading books or school materials for his students in grades one through three, other useful books for mission schools, and money to pay his teachers and landlords.<sup>45</sup> The pioneer Ghanaian Adventist educationist gave out his total monthly

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<sup>41</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, pp. 102-103. See also C. A. Ackah to the Review and Herald Publishing Association, July 8, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-A, pp.2-4.

<sup>42</sup> C. A. Ackah to the Review and Herald Publishing Association, July 8, 1908, *Ibid.* pp.6-7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> C. A. Ackah to the Mission Board, October 5, 1909, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1909 -A, pp.1-2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* pp.2-3.

expenditure on four schools, each school with one teacher, he was running for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana as at October 5, 1909 as £ 9:11s (nine pounds eleven shillings), broken down as follows:<sup>46</sup>

A. Teachers' Salary

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Kikam School       | £2:10s : 0d (or pence) |
| 2. Siniboe School     | £2: 0 : 0 : 0          |
| 3. Takyinta School    | £2: 0 : 0 : 0          |
| 4. Twin Rivers School | £2: 0 : 0 : 0          |

B. School Rent £1: 1 : 0 : 0

TOTAL £9 : 11: 0 d.

C. A. Ackah added that since February 7, 1907, the day he started the Ackah SDA School at Cape Coast, Ghana, he had been pushing forward the Third Angel's Message (Revelation 14:9-11) through God Kwaame's power and grace, encouraging, engaging, and paying others to do the same, as well as preaching and teaching himself, without any outside financial support.<sup>47</sup>

In his own responses and comments on some of C. A. Ackah's letters to the brethren in America, Pastor David Babcock had his reservations and some personal qualms about young Ackah and his work for Adventism in his native Ghana, estimating Ackah's debt to the church to be over \$200, but added that, "I suppose he has spent much of this money on school work. While I could not approve of his course, I encouraged him all I could."<sup>48</sup> Babcock was unsure of the future of the SDA Church in Ghana and how the World SDA Church itself would effectively handle its responsibilities there in those early years of the twentieth century, but acknowledged that, "the work is growing there very fast."<sup>49</sup> That Babcock comment on the progress of the SDA Church in Ghana then was patently an inadvertent or silent tribute to Christian Abraham Ackah for, Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana at that time, together with its real effectiveness, dynamism, and strength was virtually a Kikam or Nzima monopoly treasure or enterprise.<sup>50</sup>

The last full year Christian Abraham Ackah was in West Africa before he set off for his planned trip to the United States was 1910 and it was a year full of activities for himself and his colleague Adventist believers and workers there, natives and aliens alike, for the God Kwaame they loved. "Bro. Ackah," Babcock noted, "writes very encouragingly of the work among the Appollonians."<sup>51</sup> At that time Ackah was stationed at his native home of Kikam for the cause of his God Kwaame, his church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and humanity.<sup>52</sup> One of his great new converts to Adventism was a young lady, a former leading idol worshiper. A faithful tithe giver among the Nzima converts then, who consistently

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>48</sup> D. C. Babcock to T. E. Bowen, October 4, 1908, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1908-B, a seven-page letter. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>49</sup> D. C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, November 1, 1909, GCA, File No. 21 ILF, 1909 – B, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 106.

<sup>51</sup> D. C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, April 24, 1910, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1910 – B, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, pp.118 and 119.

returned over £1 tithes every month is also reported to have given a handsome amount of £11: 7s: 6d as his tithe for the month of August, 1910.<sup>53</sup>

C. A. Ackah and C. E. F. Thompson, a Sierra Leonean SDA missionary to Ghana then, stationed at Axim, were the two delegates that represented the country of Ghana at the very first general meeting of SDA workers in West Africa held in Sierra Leone for some nine days, October 10-18, 1910.<sup>54</sup> Their reports at the session focused on their two mission bases in Nzimaland (Appollonia or Apollonia), Kikam and Axim, and their environs. According to Ackah, Kikam alone and its surrounding areas then had about 100 Sabbath-keepers.<sup>55</sup> But in the meantime, right there and then at the session in Sierra Leone, ironically the sun apparently began setting on the illustrious career of the great pioneer Ghanaian Adventist Christian educationist, Christian Abraham Ackah of Kikam in Nzimaland, Ghana. Those twilight days of Ackah in Seventh-day Adventist history in Ghana began with his suspension by the field committee that controlled or was responsible to the World SDA Church for the management of the SDA work in West Africa, headed by Pastor David Babcock himself, from his work and leadership role of the Adventist work at his home base of Kikam.<sup>56</sup> Two other unidentified workers in West Africa were suspended together with C. A. Ackah at the session. Young C. A. Ackah's sun was indeed setting and he was advised to step down until he had straightened up his marital relations, and settled some financial problems dragging him on into an embarrassing lawsuit.<sup>57</sup> Pastor David Babcock sent a report on this Ackah suspension to the General Conference of SDA headquarters in Washington, DC, USA, saying, "He remained at our home for some days after the meeting, sailing yesterday for Gold Coast. This gave me an excellent opportunity to encourage him. I yet hope for him. He is a bright young man, and of good address, but it was necessary for us to take the step."<sup>58</sup>

Christian Abraham Ackah took off from Ghana in 1911 for Britain or the United Kingdom, bound for the United States, his destination, as he had been thinking about and planning for a couple of years before, which, he evidently never reached.<sup>59</sup> C. A. Ackah's suspension from his job at home in Ghana by David Babcock and his field committee in 1910 served as a catalyst, pushing him into putting his US-trip dream into action, en-route up to Britain. Documentary records in America and oral traditions in Ghana together clearly indicate that young, dynamic, enterprising, and assiduous C. A. Ackah, while working for his God Kwaame, Seventh-day Adventism, and his people in Ghana in the opening years of the twentieth century had many challenges and differences of opinion with some of his colleagues like old David Babcock and other foreign SDA workers in West Africa, particularly on how some of them were handling the Church's money and operating its work generally. Ackah apparently felt devastated by his suspension tag and considered a temporary change of environments more comfortable and honorable for his composure

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<sup>53</sup> D. C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, September 5, 1910, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1910 – B, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>56</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 119.

<sup>57</sup> D. C. Babcock to W. A. Spicer, October 23, 1910, GCA, File No. 21, ILF, 1910-B, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Idem.* See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana SDA*, p. 119.

<sup>59</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *idem.* See also interviews with Dr. C. A. Ackah, Jnr. Cape Coast, Ghana, July 16, 1978 and Pastor W. B. Ackah, Jnr., Accra, Ghana, July 7, 1980.

and spiritual revival. While in Britain, determined to get to America, C. A. Ackah died there on Thursday, April 25, 1912 of “acute pulmonary tuberculosis exhaustion” at the youthful and vivacious age of about 28 or 29 (born about 1883 or 1884).<sup>60</sup>

C. A. Ackah of Kikam, Ghana never lived to realize his pet dream of one day becoming the first ordained SDA minister or pastor in Ghana and, possibly, also heading the church. But at 24, when he first set up the SDA Church and School at his native hometown of Kikam in Ghana in 1908, Ackah had a whole world and future before him for Seventh-day Adventism and God Kwaame in Ghana, but his trip to Britain, en route to America, 1911-1912, proved a tragedy for the church and God he loved.<sup>61</sup> If, however, I had the power and right to do so, I would rename Valley View University, founded seventy years later in Ghana in 1979 after C. A. Ackah had handed over his Kikam Ackah SDA School to the General Conference of SDA in 1909, “ACKAH UNIVERSITY”, in honor and memory of Christian Abraham Ackah of Kikam, Ghana, the historic, dynamic, enterprising, and visionary Ghanaian pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Christian educationist of the early twentieth century.<sup>62</sup>

This is a powerful way of using our history to highlight and emphasize one of the most crucial and life and death last days messages our God Kwaame has commissioned us to give to all mankind, encapsulated in our official name, Seventh-day Adventists, in these closing scenes of world history. We must be proud of our history and not feel ashamed, “small”, or “adabantwea” but rather stretch out our chests boldly and visibly to the world for Christ and His cause on earth, the redemption story. Let us be mindful of “the sealing age” in which we are living (Revelation 7) and Ellen White’s statement that, “the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 640). Andrews University in America and Spicer Memorial College in India are proofs that we Seventh-day Adventists understand and value our history for our great and mighty God Kwaame and His cause on earth and we should maintain that heritage and uplift the flag of Christ Jesus, our Redeemer.

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Dr. C. A. Ackah, Jnr., Cape Coast, Ghana, July 16, 1978. Christian Abraham Ackah’s death certificate issued in London, UK, currently with this author, gave his age at death as, or reduced it to, 26, for which reason, we do not know.

<sup>61</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday God*, p. 71.

<sup>62</sup> K. Owusu-Mensa to The President, West African Union Mission (WAUM) of SDA and the Valley View College (VVC) Board, Accra, Ghana, March 16, 1990. See also K. Owusu-Mensa, *Thirty Years of Valley View University 1979 To 2009*, Accra: Advent Press, 2010, p. 42.

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