

**VOLUME 4** CHAPTER 9**CHAPTER NINE****THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS BODIES –  
COMPLICITY OR RESISTANCE TO  
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES****9.0 INTRODUCTION**

**9.0.1** The interventions of religious bodies on matters of social concern, especially socio-political issues, have always carried weight. Therefore, the protest or silence by these bodies or institutions, on human rights violations and abuses influences the perceptions of many people in Ghana. To facilitate the assessment of the role, if any, of religious bodies regarding the complicity or resistance to human rights violations from 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 to 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1993, the Commission focused its work on the Churches<sup>1</sup> in Ghana, the Islamic religion, both the Orthodox and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, the Traditional Religious groups with reference, particularly, to the Afrikania Mission.

**9.0.2** The religious bodies are the conscience of the nation. In this regard, they are expected to be able to point out abuses, and work to protect and defend the rights of all Ghanaians, with a view to bringing about improvement and progress in socio-political life. religious bodies can transform individuals in society, and bring about social change that prevent human rights violations and abuses. Consequently, the following roles are expected of them

- to provide prophetic witnessing;
- to oppose human rights abuses in society;
- to build awareness on morality and human rights issues;
- to provide moral education;
- to seek moral transformation through advocacy;
- to speak clearly and without equivocation and provide moral direction on important moral issues; and
- to counsel, exhort, warn or commend the leaders and general citizenry, as and when the occasion demands.

It is expected that these roles would be performed through constant prayer regular calls for prayers, positive use of their moral authority and effective social actions.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Churches were grouped mainly as follows: Christian Council of Ghana with fourteen member churches mainly orthodox and missionary established, the Catholic Bishops' Conference with three Archdioceses and sixteen Dioceses; the Ghana Pentecostal Council with one hundred and thirty nine churches and several hundreds of churches most of whom were independent and of African origin.

---

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.0.3** The focus of this chapter is to examine the role of religious bodies in spearheading resistance to human rights abuses, contributing to the promotion of respect for human rights, as well as the impact that these activities had on the human rights landscape during the mandate period. The chapter also highlights the significance of statements, communiqués, pastoral letters, Press releases etc, from these religious bodies, at the critical times when they were issued. It is hoped that the religious bodies would be strengthened to keep up with their advocacy role and continue to provide moral guidance to the nation.

**9.0.4** The chapter is divided into three parts, based on the three main religions represented in Ghana, namely Traditional Religion, Islam and Christian religion. The discussion is organised in the chronological order of the various political eras within the mandate period.

## **9.1 ABOUT THE THREE MAIN RELIGIONS IN GHANA**

### **9.1.1 THE TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS GROUP**

#### **9.1.1 History**

**9.1.1.1** Traditional Religion is the oldest religion in Ghana. It is not organized in the manner of Christian or Islamic religions. The nature and history of the Traditional Religious group is quite different from other religious groups. It has no organised hierarchy or association to spearhead its activities at the national level and so its influence on national politics has been minimal. In 1985, the late Osofo Okomfo Damuah, a Roman Catholic Priest, left the Catholic Faith to establish the Afrikania Mission<sup>2</sup> of Ghana. This Mission, for the first time, provided a mouthpiece for the various traditional religious groups that had come together to form the Mission.

**9.1.1.2** The practice of Traditional Religion has different cults that deal with specific issues or aspect of life. For example, there are fertility cults, healing or medicine cults, war cults, protective cults, prosperity cult, witchcraft cults, etc. Secondly, Traditional Religion is the belief system underlying the Ghanaian culture, and could be described as the belief or spiritual substructure of Ghanaian culture.<sup>3</sup> This is because some aspects of this religion are practised at the sub-conscious level, such that even though the average Ghanaian might not be an adherent of the practices of Traditional Religion, its belief system pervades the entire culture as reflected in the use of language, names, naming and burial systems, etc.

---

<sup>2</sup> A religious sect that practises and believes in combining values of Traditional Religion and Christian worship.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum to the National Reconciliation Commission.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.1.1.3** The role that traditional religion played in human rights abuse was an indirect one. Rumours of rituals for protection have become part of our socio-political culture. The phenomenon of ritual murder has been part of the Ghanaian system of cultural beliefs, and has, in fact, gained prominence in legends and folktales. This phenomenon has also served as explanation for strange or extraordinary homicide cases in the country.

**9.1.1.4** There was also an Akan belief that a messenger must accompany a dead chief on his last journey to the land of his ancestors. Someone therefore had to be killed to serve that purpose. The murder of Akyea Mensa (Apedwahene), a case popularly referred to as “Kyebi Murder Trial” was purported to have served as a ritual sacrifice, to accompany a dead paramount chief of Kyebi. The deceased was killed and buried on a riverbed, after the murderers had diverted the course of the brook and redirected the same brook to conceal the grave<sup>4</sup>.

**9.1.1.5** Another belief system relates to the acquisition of power through the use of *juju*. This involves rituals performed with human blood or body parts. On 23<sup>th</sup> February, 1988, Nana Twene, Krontihene of Abesim, and his wife, Susana Ameyaa, together with four others at Abesim near Sunyani, in the Brong Ahafo Region<sup>5</sup>, kidnapped and murdered a 38-year old housewife, Madam Lamley Sampah. During the trial by the tribunal sitting in Sunyani in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana, it was revealed, inter alia that, the Krontihene wanted the blood and some body parts of the named victim to enable him secure power, so that, no one could challenge him<sup>6</sup> when he spoke.

**9.1.2 Traditional Religion In Relation To Ritual Killing For Political Power**

**9.1.2.1** In the 1960s, rumour was rife, that office holders carried out ritual killings to consolidate their political power. In 1967, for example, during the abortive coup in which Lt-Gen Emmanuel K Kotoka lost his life, it was widely rumoured that the fetish priests who made juju for his successful coup the previous year, were the same ones whom the coup makers from Ho Mortar Regiment approached. This therefore accounted for the ability of the coup makers to overcome Lt-Gen Kotoka. Whether these rumours were true or not, they are alleged to have been the basis for the elimination of some fetish priests many years later. A case in point is the killing of the popular fetish priest, Akakpovi Ahiaku, a.k.a Yeye Boye of Atidzive near Abor<sup>7</sup>. There was evidence before the Commission that the fetish priest was arrested by soldiers at his village in March, 1982, and taken to the Residency of the Volta

<sup>4</sup> West Africa Court of Appeal Volume 11, February 15, 1945 – This was a murder case involving the Abontendomhene Asare Apietu, Kwasi Pipim, Kwame Kagya, Kwaku Amoako Atta, Opoku Afwennee, Kwadjo Amoako, Aaron Eugene Boakye alias Yaw Boakye and Owusu Akyem Tenteng, tried in court.

<sup>5</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol.9,628, Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1988, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum to the National Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>7</sup> *News Bulletin*, Association of Recognised Professional Bodies, Vol.2 No. 2; July 1982.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

Regional Administration at Ho, ostensibly to be transported to Accra to meet with the political authorities. He was later found dead, with his body partially burnt. His home containing his shrine was vandalised and burnt to ashes, as were also the homes of the elders of the cult.

**9.1.2.2** Traditional Priests were also believed to have power to assist persons plotting to destabilize governments of the day, through the use of magico-religious powers. They therefore featured in every allegation of coup plot in the mandate period.

**9.1.3 Traditional Religion In Relation To Killing For Ritual Purposes**

**9.1.3.1** Traditional religion has also been linked to human rights abuse on account of the widely-held belief that through the use of human parts, rituals could be performed to affect the material circumstances of the individual making the request. Consequently, some individuals were killed for purposes that must have been related to the performance of rituals. The circumstances surrounding certain killings that occurred, and the way the dead bodies were found, lent credence to the suspicion that they were not ordinary murders. Very often the bodies were found mutilated with some vital parts missing. A number of murder cases reported in some parts of Ghana in the 1980s fall into this category. For instance, in January, 1981, the body of Kingsley Ackaah, alias Kwame Kaya, a fifteen-year-old schoolboy and native of Baakrom near Sefwi Bekwai, was found without his head<sup>8</sup>. Again, in November, 1981, the body of nine-year old Kwasi Gyimah was found at the outskirts of Sefwi Bekwai without his head<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, in November, 1984, Kwaku Nkrumah, a sixty five-year old palm wine tapper of Sefwi Bekwai, was found dead in the bush without his head.<sup>10</sup> Also, in May, 1986, thirteen-year old Akwasi Ampomaning, a schoolboy from Sukusuku near Sefwi Bekwai was found dead with his arms missing<sup>11</sup>. Again, Kumade Mensah Zormelo was killed for a sacrifice that is required annually, in accordance with traditional practices, to enable the fishermen of Kedzi, to have bumper fishing season.<sup>12</sup> All these killings are believed to have been committed to serve ritual purposes.

**9.1.3.2** There is also the quest for wealth. For this reason, there are some people who believe that through the use of *juju*, their state of poverty can change for the better. Thus, with the hope of becoming rich overnight, the drive to commit ritual murder has been noted among certain categories of persons. In one murder case, which took place in Sefwi Bekwai in the Western Region of Ghana, the killers were the victim's uncle and three other men, who were promised a reward of an amount of c3 million as "contract fee". Similarly, the Chief, Nana Agyei who was charged together with the

<sup>8</sup> *Joy Ride Magazine* Vol. 93, November, 1988, pp.3-14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Azametsi v The Republic* [1974] GLR 228, CA at pp394-402

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

killers, was said to have been the one who requested a human head, to send to a shrine located along the Ghana - Côte d'Ivoire border in the Western Region for it to be changed into cash<sup>13</sup>.

**9.1.4 The Perpetrators Of Ritual Murder**

**9.1.4.1** There are two main categories of perpetrators – namely, those who hire the services of others to do the killing on their behalf, and those who do the killing themselves. Many a time, the people who are arrested or charged on murder cases appear to be poor people, struggling to make ends meet. They are hired by the well-to-do in society to do the killing on their behalf, such as the case of the Sefwi Bekwai murder case. Nana Agyei, one of the culprits, was said to have engaged the services of the four others charged, in return for a certain amount of money, if the plan was well executed. In other instances, the well-to-do actually took part in the ritual killing.

**9.1.4.2** Some fetish priests and herbalists are also believed to be involved in ritual murder. Some fetish priests have been accused of using human body parts and blood to prepare *juju* for their clients. Where these body parts and blood were secured from, is yet to be ascertained. However, one of the rumoured charges against some traditional priests tortured and killed in the Volta Region, was the allegation of murder against them. In April, 1982, for instance, soldiers arrested Avorga Ahiagba of Wlite near Akatsi, for possessing human skulls. He was alleged to have pleaded that the skulls were ancestral property. Possessing no other evidence to the contrary, the court fined him ₵700.00. Subsequently, Ahiagba mysteriously disappeared, after his release from prison-custody, but was later found dead with his body partially burnt, near the Ho stadium.<sup>14</sup>

**9.1.4.3** In all the known ritual murders tried in the courts, women have been conspicuously missing in the list of alleged perpetrators. There was, however, one instance in which a woman was involved, and in which the victim was a woman.<sup>15</sup>

**9.1.4.4** One other fact that also needs to be mentioned is that some of the perpetrators either know their victims or have close blood relations with them. In the case of Kofi Kyinto in the Sefwi Bekwai murder case, it was his uncle, Benjamin Affi, a 28-year old farmer, who lured him to be killed. Benjamin Affi witnessed the actual execution of his nephew.

**9.1.5 Trokosi**

**9.1.5.1** *Trokosi* is a traditional religious practice, which evolved among the Ewes and Dangmes and which prevails in shrines where there are deities. In the past, the essence

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Graphic* Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1987, No 11504 p:4

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, no 9,628 Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1988, p.3.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

of the deity was to protect the community, and the fundamental problems and questions of everyday life were also addressed to these deities. In those societies, it is to the shrines that a large number of people turn for resolution of life's problems – be they physical, mental or spiritual.<sup>16</sup> The exact period when the *Trokosi* system began is unknown. Oral tradition estimates that the practice could have started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> The first original *Trokosis* in Eweland were, Torgbui Adzima, Tornui, and Sui.<sup>18</sup> The practice of giving up of vestal virgins by families as payment to the shrines for an infraction committed by one of its members evolved from these original *Trokosis*. A *Trokosi* is also sometimes called *Fiasidi*,<sup>19</sup> meaning “a marriageable King's initiate.” Many reasons have been put forward to explain why young girls and occasionally young boys, are committed to the gods. Foremost among these reasons is that it forms part of the administration of justice and maintenance of law and order within the particular society. The practice also involves pledges made to the gods in time of war to ensure victory.

**9.1.5.2.** *Trokosi* practice is now mainly regarded as a means of averting the wrath of the gods. This is done by invoking the gods for mercy, in cases where an offence has been reported to the shrine. It is also a traditional judicial system, but one fraught with serious human rights violations, as the practice involves the incarceration and abuse of innocent young women. The practice of *Trokosi* is now recognized to be akin to slavery. The predominant modern view is that the *Trokosi* system is obnoxious, inhuman and a violation of the human rights of the persons involved, and therefore must be stopped.<sup>20</sup>

**9.1.5.3** There are 51 known shrines where the practice of *Trokosi* still goes on in the country. The composition and the geographical spread of the practice in Ghana show that the Volta Region accounts for forty three out of the fifty one shrines, Greater Accra Region, five and Eastern Region, three. In the Eastern and Greater Accra Regions, the shrines are concentrated in the Dangme East and Dangme West Districts. The 3 shrines in the Eastern Region seem to be related to those in the other regions. There are three shrines in the Yilo Krobo area, three in the Dangme West, and 2 in Dangme East<sup>21</sup>. The victims of the practice are mostly female, although on rare occasions, males are also involved. It was estimated that by 1998, there were about four thousand and forty two *Trokosi* in bondage, out of whom only about ten were male.<sup>22</sup> There are both priests and priestesses who administer the various cults.

<sup>16</sup> Report of the National Workshop on *Trokosi* System in Ghana, International Needs, Ghana, April 27-28, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *The Spectator*, no 1416 Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Three –Day Workshop on *Trokosi* (April 27-29, 1998), organised by International Needs, Ghana, Sponsored by the British Council.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the National Workshop on *Trokosi* System in Ghana, International Needs, Ghana, April 27-28, 1998. International Needs, an NGO in Ghana dedicated to the eradication of the practice.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

---

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9****9.1.6 Witches' Camps**

Belief in witchcraft is widespread in Ghana. People are sent to shrines to be “de-witched” after being accused of being witches, often by their close relations. Sometimes, the formal “outing” of a witch is done by a fetish priest(ess) of a shrine in the locality. The practice of ostracising such persons from their community, and confining them in hopes of eliminating their evil influence, has been identified as a cultural practice in parts of northern Ghana. In Gambaga and Gnaani in the Northern Region, the site of two major Witches' Camps, there are to be found, people, mostly women, who have been chased out of their communities for practising witchcraft. On arrival at the camp, they are sent to the chief or the elder, who performs rituals on them to “de-witch” them. Thereafter, they are absorbed into the community, and although permitted to return to their original homes if they so desire, the hostile social milieu and stigmatisation, discourage such re-entry. Most of these women are poor and elderly women, and the practice removes them from the support, financial and material that old age requires. This therefore violates their right to a peaceful old age and the right to live with their families.

**9.1.7 Summary**

**9.1.7.1** Traditional religious practices have been labelled as being obsolete, thus, crimes such as the serial killing of women, which took place in Ghana in the later part of 1999, have been explained away by some people as ritual killings.

**9.1.7.2** Again, so long as it is believed that the acquisition of power and wealth accords one instant respect and the best treatment wherever one finds oneself, and the fact that this can be achieved through the use of *juju*, the drive to commit ritual murder may continue to persist.

**9.1.7.3** The impact of legends and folktales on the belief systems and motives of traditional religion may drive some people to resort to such practices that invariably trample upon peoples rights.

**9.2 THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS GROUP****9.2.1 Historical Background**

**9.2.1.1** There are two main branches of Islam in Ghana, namely, the Orthodox Islam, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. The inception of Islam in the country was through the efforts of traders and itinerant Islamic clerics and teachers. There are

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

many Orders in Orthodox Islam.<sup>23</sup> The two best known in Ghana are the Qadiriyya, founded by Abdal Qadir,<sup>24</sup> and the Tijaniyya, founded by Ahmad Tijani in Algeria.<sup>25</sup>

**9.2.1.2** In 1921, a movement was introduced into the Gold Coast, known as the Ahmadiyya Movement. This movement originated from the Indian sub-continent, and was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the nineteenth century; it began as a reform movement within Islam.<sup>26</sup>

**9.2.2 Government-Muslim Relations**

**9.2.2.1** Successive governments since the colonial era have tried to influence the leadership and organizational structure of the Muslim community. They did so either in the name of uniting the Muslims or soliciting their loyalty in the implementation of their programmes.

**9.2.2.2** Since the inception of multi-party politics in Ghana, various Muslim communities have allied themselves with different political parties that they believed would best protect their interests.<sup>27</sup>

**9.2.2.3** Prior to agitations towards Independence, the Muslim community was apprehensive that its right to exist might not be recognized. In view of this, the only way for the community's existence to be guaranteed was to come together as a unified body. This, they did by forming the Moslem Association Party (MAP) in 1954, that assumed a violent anti-CPP stance.<sup>28</sup> The MAP was later banned, when the CPP government promulgated the Avoidance of Discrimination Act<sup>29</sup> in 1957.

**9.2.2.4** The Gold Coast Moslem Association (GCMA) was among the early Muslim organizations to emerge. Its leaders were Imam Abass (Chief Imam) and Alhaji Amadu Baba (Zongo Chief of Kumasi). GCMA's objectives were to harness the material resources of the Muslims, and also to cater for the social and religious needs of the Gold Coast Moslems. The GCMA departed from its social objectives to actively participate in politics in 1939, after the earthquake in Accra. The Muslims felt that

<sup>23</sup> A Religious Order is a group that is centred around the teachings of a leader, whose path the believers follow.

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder "The Religions of Africa" in *Africa South of the Sahara*, (20<sup>th</sup> Edition) Epworth Press, 1991, p.91.

<sup>25</sup> A Religious Order is a group that is centred around the teachings of a leader, whose path the believers follow.

<sup>26</sup> Official publication of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Ghana, p.1; Mohammed Affum, "The Ahmadiyya Movement" *Daily Graphic* vol. 9278 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1980, p.3.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Hon Alhaji Bin Salih, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> J.H. Price, 'The role of Islam in Gold Coast Politics' In West African Institute of Social and Economic Research proceedings of Third annual Conference 1954 (Ibadan).

<sup>29</sup> Avoidance of Discriminating Bill (December 1957), forbade the existence of parties on regional, tribal or religious basis.



**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

there was unfair distribution of building materials to the affected Muslim communities. Thus, it was GCMA's social concern for Muslims that pushed it into politics. When it turned to politics, an Accra lawyer, Mustapha Awoonor Renner, and a Kumasi lawyer, Cobbina Kessie, became its leaders. The GCMA later metamorphosed into the MAP in the early 1950s.

**9.2.2.5** The Nkrumah administration saw the emergence of this party as a threat to his effort to win more Muslim support, and to increase CPP membership. Consequently, Dr. Nkrumah established the Moslem Youth Congress (MYC) of Ghana to serve as the mouthpiece of Muslims. It was believed that the formation of the MYC was intended to undermine the leadership of the GCMA, and to limit its political influence in the country. In addition, Muslim leaders considered the establishment of the MYC as an imposition, since the government handpicked the leaders. The MYC was therefore not only seen to be opposed to the GCMA, but also a wing of the CPP.

**9.2.2.6** The leadership of the MYC gradually gained prominence and political influence. For example, Z B Shardow, who was the co-Chairman of the Muslim Youth Congress, became the National Organiser of the Ghana Young Pioneer movement (GYP).<sup>30</sup> In the same way, Mallam Futa was made the Imam of Accra, after Dr. Nkrumah had removed Mohammed Abass from that office in 1959. Both the MYC and the GCMA became ineffective and lost their prominence after the overthrow of the CPP Government in 1966.

**9.2.2.7** In reality both the GCMA and the MAP were anti-CPP, because they thought the policies of CPP were a threat to the people they represented. By adopting this anti-government position, the leaders of these two Muslim groups lost some rights and privileges. In addition to these, the deportations of some of their leaders and the removal of the Imam from office, coupled with detentions under the Preventive Detention Act silenced them and reduced their influence in national affairs.

**9.2.3** **6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1957- 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY, 1966 :**  
**CONVENTION PEOPLE'S PARTY (CPP)**

**9.2.3.1 The MAP**

**9.2.3.1.1** In the late 1950s the MAP, was dismembered by a series of Deportation Orders made by the government, as the leaders were alleged to be of Northern Nigerian extraction. Over a period of time the number of people within the leadership of the MAP who were deported was as follows: 68 in 1957, 62 in 1958, 75 in 1959, and 54 in 1960<sup>31</sup>. The issue of the deportations raised some moral questions in their application. There were allegations of riots among the various Muslim groups, that

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. 4522 Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1965, p.12.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind; Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders* 1962, Accra, 1965.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

made them liable to the charge of violence, and the CPP Government resorted to the deportation of some of the Muslim leaders. Those who were deported were known allies of the National Liberation Movement (NLM).<sup>32</sup>

**9.2.3.1 2** Later, the MAP merged with others to form the United Party, when the Avoidance of Discrimination Act, 1957 (CA 38) prohibited the existence of religious-based political parties.

**9.2.4            24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 1966 – 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 1969:  
NATIONAL LIBERATION COUNCIL (NLC)**

**9.2.4.1** The National Liberation Council (NLC), which toppled the CPP Government on February 24, 1966, banned the GCMA and the MYC of Ghana, due to their anti-CPP and pro-CPP rivalry.

**9.2.4.2** The issue of human rights abuses during the NLC against certain individuals that raised public concerns were the public ridicule of Boye Moses, one of Dr. Nkrumah's security aides, who was paraded in a cage on the streets of Accra<sup>33</sup>, the strike involving the mine workers of Ashanti Goldfields in Obuasi, during which three of the workers were shot dead by the police<sup>34</sup>, and the decision of the government to ban most of the leading members of the former CPP from contesting the 1969 general elections.<sup>35</sup> All these violations did not elicit any comment from the Muslim communities and their leaders at the time. In short nothing much can be said about the activities of Muslim Organizations under this regime.

**9.2.5            1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 1969 – 12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1972  
THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

**9.2.5.1** In 1969, the efforts of the Busia Government to unite the Ghana Muslim Mission and the Ghana Muslim Community led to the creation of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. Some Ga Muslims and Muslims in the northern part of Ghana formed the council. Alhaji Haruna Attah, then a Minister in the Second Republic, inaugurated the council in April 1970 at Tamale. In his inaugural speech, Alhaji Attah praised Muslims for coming together to form the council to deal with Islamic Affairs. He urged them to render genuine services, adding that by their unity, they would be laying a firm foundation for a better administration of the affairs of Muslims.

<sup>32</sup> John Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1946-1966*, Asempa Publishers, Ghana 1988, p.161.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Graphic*, Vol.5075 Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1967, p.1.

<sup>34</sup> Ninsin, K.A. and Drah, F.K. *Political Parties and Democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic*, Woeli Publishing Services, Accra, 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Buah, F.K. *A History of Ghana* Macmillan Education Ltd, London and Oxford, 1998.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.2.5.2** One of the most significant landmarks of this regime was the enforcement of the Aliens Compliance Order.<sup>36</sup> Many Muslim immigrants were affected by this Order. The implementation caused great suffering, and there were many pathetic scenes as the deportees scrambled for transport to locations that were completely foreign to some of them. For instance, according to an eye-witness account, a man committed suicide by slashing his throat on the steps of a bus, while he and others were being transported to Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), because he had no idea where he would stay in Upper Volta, having been born and bred in Ghana.<sup>37</sup>

**9.2.5.3** There was also the dismissal of 568 civil servants that became known as ‘Apollo 568’<sup>38</sup> and caused unease in the era. This too might have affected some families of the Muslim community. There were no such petitions or protests from the Muslim groups or their leaders.

**9.2.6** **13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1972 – 3RD JUNE, 1979:  
NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL (NRC) AND  
SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) I & II**

**9.2.6.1 Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC).**

**9.2.6.1.1** Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong came to power on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1972, as Chairman of the NRC and Head of State. He received pledges of support from the Muslim leadership. In the same year the NRC set up the National Islamic Committee to settle all disputes among Islamic organizations in the country and to ensure unity among Muslims. The NRC was of the view that, it was only reconciliation and unity of purpose that would restore to the Islamic groups the influence that they had lost<sup>39</sup>.

**9.2.6.1.2** On 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1972, Alhaji Mahmoud Lamptey, an Imam of the Armed Forces who was the chairman of the committee presented to the NRC Government, a report on the proposals for a Muslim organisation in the country. The Report was received on behalf of the government by Major Roger J A Felli, who congratulated the Committee for a good work done and said it was the aim of government to unite all Islamic organisations in the country<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Aliens Compliance Order was a government policy to compel foreigners to regularise their stay in accordance with the Immigration law within 14 days, or leave Ghana.

<sup>37</sup> Memorandum to the National Reconciliation Commission .

<sup>38</sup> “Apollo” is a reference to the nickname given conjunctival infection that affected some people after the successful space mission, Apollo 11 in 1969. Most of the people affected were quarantined to avoid the spread of the disease. The term was applied to the 568 Civil Servants, who were sacked during the era of the Second Republic.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. 6765 Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1972, back page.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. 6847 Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1972, p.11.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.2.6.1.3** The efforts of the NRC Government in ensuring peace and harmony among Muslim bodies gave birth to the Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC). It was inaugurated on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1973, at the Accra Community Centre by the Commissioner for Information, Lt Col Chumogo D Benni. In a special message to Muslims on the occasion, the Head of State, expressed his happiness for the country, that a distinct body had succeeded in settling amicably, all disputes among Muslims.<sup>41</sup> On the Muslim front, Alhaji Dauda Otoo praised the government for its contribution to the unity of the Ghana Muslim Community, the Ghana Muslim Mission and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, a goal that had been impossible to achieve over a period of 20 years by previous governments<sup>42</sup>.

**9.2.6.1.4** Indeed, the GMRC after its formation became the mouthpiece of all Muslims in national politics. The council was very instrumental in the campaign for the adoption of the Union Government (UNIGOV) concept, which was proposed by the SMC in the late 1970s. Alhaji Mohammed Alhassan, who was of the GMRC declared in a seminar that: “it will be suicidal for the country to return once more to the game of party politics which has no respect for old age and which had sowed seeds of dissension in the country”<sup>43</sup>. The GMRC also represented the Muslim Community in the 1979 Constituent Assembly, which drafted the 1979 Republican Constitution. Alhaji Bashiru Futa, a legal practitioner, represented the Council.

**9.2.6.1.5** On 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1979, a press conference was held in Accra by a number of Muslims, who claimed to represent the entire Muslim community. At the press conference, they rejected the idea of party politics, which “once divided the Islamic religion by the formation of the erstwhile Muslim Association Party.” Therefore they embraced the idea of UNIGOV. In a statement read on behalf of the Muslim chiefs by their secretary, Alhaji Ramadan Ibrahim, they said:

We overwhelmingly embrace the proposed Union Government, which is in line with the basic principles of the Islamic concept that all men are equal and united.<sup>44</sup>

**9.2.6.1.6** In another development, Sheikh Ibrahim Amartey of the council urged Ghanaians to eschew their apathetic attitude to the proposal of UNIGOV and unite to support the government in the search for a suitable government for the nation.<sup>45</sup>

**9.2.6.1.7** The statement was typical of the several statements that came from various Muslim groups between January and March, 1978. For instance, a nine-member committee led by Chief Adama Damaley, head of the Sabon Zongo community in

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. 6986 Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1973, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. 7397 Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1974, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol.8104, Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1976, p.6

<sup>44</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6706 Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1979, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol. ... . Monday ,3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1979, p.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

Accra, urged all religious people to vote ‘Yes’ at the 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1978 Referendum, to ensure progress and stability<sup>46</sup>. Also, Alhaji Yakubu Tetteh, founder and National Organiser of the Muslim Association asked an audience at Zenith Hall, Sekondi, to support UNIGOV, because Islam and the Holy Quran stressed, in essence, unity.<sup>47</sup>

**9.2.6.1.8** A fact worthy of note is that some of the Muslim chiefs were also politicians. For example, Alhaji Salihu Maikankan was the Chairman of the Darkuman branch of the Ghana Peace and Solidarity Council.<sup>48</sup> That body was a political wing of General Acheampong’s Unigov campaign. Therefore, suggestions that some of them were involved in politics in the name of religion, cannot be ruled out of discussions on this issue.

**9.2.6.1.9** Having openly declared their support for UNIGOV, they were not in a position to criticise the human rights abuses that the regime indulged in, during the campaign for the referendum on Unigov.

**9.2.7** **4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1979 – 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 1979:**  
**ARMED FORCES REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (AFRC),**

**9.2.7.1** The AFRC under the chairmanship of Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings. replaced the ruling Supreme Military Council government on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1979. The government proceeded to deal ruthlessly with people it perceived to have committed various offences. These atrocious actions of the AFRC government included public caning, especially of market women stripped to near-nakedness, arbitrary dismissals, seizure of property and indiscriminate killings by soldiers men.

**9.2.7.2** Such actions of the military government elicited public outcry from civil society, religious bodies and other organisations. However, the GMRC, under the leadership of Alhaji Dauda Otoo commended the AFRC’s decision to despatch those found guilty by revolutionary courts<sup>49</sup>.

**9.2.7.3** The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Wa suffered abuse of its rights, when soldiers seized many bags of grains meant for the poor in the area.<sup>50</sup> It was thus only the Ahmadiyya group that spoke vehemently against the arbitrary seizure of property of which it had fallen victim.

<sup>46</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6303 Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1978, p.8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6316 Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1978, back page.

<sup>48</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6268 Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1978 p.1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, Vol. 6706 Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1979, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, no. 6742 Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1979, p.1.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9****9.2.8 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 1979 – 30<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 1981:  
THE THIRD REPUBLIC**

**9.2.8.1** The political influence of Hajia Amina Baby Ocansey, the National Women’s Organiser of the People’s National Party (PNP), brought about the formation of the National Assembly of Muslim Women in 1981. This Assembly was established to organise and co-ordinate the activities of Muslim women. Although, the GMRC was still the official mouthpiece of the Muslims, it was not vibrant.

**9.29 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 1981 – 6<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1993:  
PROVISIONAL NATIONAL DEFENCE COUNCIL (PNDC)**

**9.2.9.1** The GMRC continued to champion the cause of Muslims and constituted the official mouthpiece of all Muslims until the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1981 coup. This coup brought into power the PNDC, again under the chairmanship of Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings. A number of Islamic associations such as the United Ghana Muslim Representative Council (UGMRC) and the National Muslim Task Force, emerged after the coup. The National Muslim Task Force was under the leadership of Alhaji T.B. Damba, and it aimed at mobilizing Muslims towards the National Economic Recovery Programme of 1982.

**9.2.9.2** Attempts by the PNDC Government to unite the GMRC and the UGMRC led to the establishment of the National Islamic Secretariat in 1985. Again, when Colonel Muammar-al-Qathafi of Libya paid a visit to Ghana in 1985, he made a call for Muslim unity. This brought about the formation of the Federation of Muslim Councils in 1987. In response to PNDC Law 221, to monitor the activities of religious bodies in the country, *Din-il-Islam*<sup>51</sup> was also established in Ghana in 1989, to register under this law, “as the superstructure” for all orthodox Islamic associations, as one religious body in the country.

**9.2.9.3** The way and manner, these organizations were set up, coupled with the fact that, the initiatives were not generally from the Muslim masses, limited their activities. The new organisations failed to receive the mandate of the general Muslim body, and this situation led to the manipulation of the organisations by a few, in the name of all Muslims, particularly in its dealings with the central government.

**9.2.9.4** Thus, rivalry developed between the GMRC and the UGMRC in championing the destiny of Islam and Muslims in the country and this situation led to calls from individuals, Islamic institutions, Islamic and Arab Missions and government for peace and unity in the Muslim community. Among these were personalities such as Hajia Amina Baby Ocansey, National Assembly Women’s Organiser, Sgt Muhammed Alidu

<sup>51</sup> *Din-il-Islam* meaning Association of Islam.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

Upper East Regional Organising Assistant of Police, in-charge of Committee for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), and the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia.

**9.2.9.5** Ultimately an accord between the GMRC and the UGMRC was signed on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1985, in Accra, and led to the formation of the National Islamic Secretariat as an umbrella body for all Muslim organizations (Sunni) in the country. Each of the two bodies had five representatives on the National Islamic Secretariat with Alhaji Dauda Otoo and Alhaji B A R Braimah, as the first two National Co-ordinators.

**9.2.9.6** Colonel Muammar-al-Qathafi's call for Muslim unity as a means of promoting the advancement of the 31<sup>st</sup> December Revolution was accompanied by his pledge of Libya's preparedness to provide financial support to the Islamic Council. The pledge was redeemed in January, 1987, when a Libyan delegation participating in the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 31<sup>st</sup> December Revolution, made a presentation of items worth ₵22 million to the National Islamic Secretariat. The delegation also extended an invitation to the leadership of the National Islamic Secretariat to attend an International Islamic Conference to be held in Tripoli<sup>52</sup>.

**9.2.9.7** Thereafter in 1987, the National Islamic Secretariat sent a high-ranking delegation of over 30 Muslim leaders, to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Islamic Conference of West African Countries held in Tripoli, Libya. The Ghanaian delegation held a series of discussions with the World Islamic Call Society (WICS). These discussions led to the signing of the Tripoli Accord between the two parties. One of the issues contained in the "Tripoli Accord" was that the National Islamic Secretariat, be replaced with the Federation of Muslim Councils. This was to serve as the General Secretariat, and it was to be run by the heads of the various Islamic Councils in the ten regions of Ghana.

**9.2.9.8** On the 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1987, Chairman Rawlings inaugurated the Federation of Muslim Councils in Accra. In his inaugural speech, Flt Lt Rawlings made it clear that the Federation of Muslim Councils would not by itself guarantee the hopes and aspirations which led to its formation, unless Muslims, as individuals, and as a group, were prepared to support the Federation to achieve its goals, with singleness of purpose, understanding and tolerance.<sup>53</sup>

**9.2.9.9** Alhaji Dauda Otoo, again, served as the first National Co-ordinator of the Federation of Muslim Councils. The structure of the Federation of Muslim Councils was not different from that of National Islamic Secretariat, thus constituting a departure from the Tripoli Accord.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Graphic*, vol.11264 Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1987, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> *Daily Graphic*, Vol. 11318, Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1987.

---

**VOLUME 4** CHAPTER 9**9.2.10 Summary**

**9.2.10.1** Looking at the facts presented above, it can be seen that, since Independence, various Muslim communities have allied themselves with different governments, which they considered would best protect their interests. Political parties in government have also used Muslim communities to further their own sectoral goals.

**9.2.10.2** By and large, there have been many attempts to institute a Muslim council, which would act as the umbrella organization for all Muslims, but the attempts have not always been successful. There is now in existence the Office of the National Chief Imam and the Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. These are all attempts to establish an identifiable national identity and give Muslims a voice in national affairs.

**9.2.10.3** Generally, the Muslim communities feared that colonial rule would impose Christianity on them. This led the Muslim communities in Ghana to isolate themselves from active participation as a group to react to issues, which bordered on human rights abuses against either them or other people in society.

**9.2.10.4** It could therefore be said that Muslims in Ghana had, never as a group, championed any cause, when it came to issues of public agitation against human rights violations and abuses. During military takeovers in Ghana, people were maltreated, maimed, whipped, killed and some properties were seized, but none of these produced official comment from the Muslim Community. This is not surprising since at most times the leaders of the new Muslim unity organizations were handpicked by the government of the day. The result of this silence has been the marginalization of Muslims in issues relating to the protection of human rights. Apart from a few Muslims in politics, the Muslim communities have not been politically active in terms of formal protests or endorsement of government policies and directives. The Ghana Muslim Mission was not in favour of the Preventive Detention Act, yet because of its non-political stance, the Mission could not officially and openly condemn the Act, although some of its members suffered under it.<sup>54</sup>

**9.2.10.5** The Ghana Muslim Mission has stated that because of its non-political stance, it did not make any official protest against the effects of the PDA. It is unclear what “non-political” means, because the refusal to comment on the arrest and deportation of its own members on account of non-political stance would appear to be an abdication of the organization’s social responsibility to its own members. It is fair to conclude that the organization did not get involved for fear of reprisals.

---

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum to National Reconciliation.



**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.2.10.6** The implementation the Deportation Act to get rid of prominent leaders of the Muslim community<sup>55</sup> during the CPP regime, helped to silence the Muslim community.

**9.2.10.7** Neither the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission nor the Orthodox Muslims supported brutalities, killings, seizure of property and other related human rights violation. However, although they frowned on human rights violations such as flogging in public, detention without trial and the parading of human beings in iron-cage, they did not openly protest those atrocities.

**9.3 THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS GROUP****9.3.1 Historical Background**

**9.3.1.1** Christianity came to Ghana, then Gold Coast, through Christian Missionary work in Elmina. It all started with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1471, and from that time to date, a lot of churches have sprung up. Notable among them are the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and several Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches.<sup>56</sup>

**9.3.1.2** The Christian Church has had a great impact on the Ghanaian society and has shaped a number of our modern national institutions. This is as a result of the nature of the missionary activity, such as formal education, that brought Christianity to Ghana. Although in principle, the colonial government practised the modern theory of separation between church and state, its *modus operandi* inadvertently propagated and infused Christian ideals and values into national institutions. Ghana was therefore regarded as a Christian nation, not by virtue of numbers, but by institutional affinity and residual Christian ideals and values in our society. The close relationship between the Christian church and colonialism, whether by default or design, gave the Christian Church a great social recognition in the socio-political life of this country.

**9.3.1.3** In Ghana, some leaders of the various Christian religious groups have been vocal in drawing government's attention to what is seen as human rights violations abuses in Ghana's political life. Christian religious bodies and successive governments have sometimes collaborated in various areas, especially on issues of socio-culture interest, because in Ghana there has not been a clear distinction between the sacred and the secular.

---

<sup>55</sup> Deportation Act of 1957 enabled the government of CPP to deport people perceived as opposition to the government.

<sup>56</sup> Asiedu M.K. Thomas, (1993), *State and Church Relation under Provisional National Defence Council* (Unpublished) Long Essay submitted to the Department for the Study of Religions, Univ. of Ghana.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.1.4** The rapid socio-cultural and political transformation of Ghana, made it necessary for adjustments to be made in such collaborations between Church and State in the post-Independence Ghana. Consequently, when Christian religious bodies got involved in politics, they did so not as a matter of civic duty, but mainly on the basis of certain ideologies, laws, and pronouncements by certain personalities, which were perceived as blasphemies and in contravention of international human rights laws.

**9.3.2**                                 **6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1957 – 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY, 1966:  
CONVENTION PEOPLE’S PARTY (CPP)**

**9.3.2.1** From the time of Independence, ie from 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 up to at least 1962, it was clear that majority of the people of Ghana supported Dr. Kwame Nkrumah; the reason being that he had created order, after the chaotic campaign for independence. Through this feat also, he won respect for Ghana from the international community. For many Ghanaians, Dr. Nkrumah had saved them from unemployment, personal degradation and humiliation. Even, foreign powers saw him as a force to be reckoned with.

**9.3.2.2** The first sharp conflict between the State and the Christian Church occurred, when Bishop Reginald Richard Roseveare, the Anglican Bishop of Accra, criticized the formation of the Ghana Young Pioneer movement (GYP). Bishop Roseveare was subsequently deported after having been vilified in the press. Although he was later allowed to return, the church had been sufficiently cowed. Rev Fr Vincent K. Damuah of the Catholic Church, was also briefly detained for criticising the government over Bishop Roseveare’s deportation and other church-related issues. It took the personal protest of Archbishop John Kodwo Amissah, Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast, to secure his release.

**9.3.2.3** Again, some of the heads of educational institutions owned by the Christian religious groups displeased the government when they failed to show support for the formation of the GYP movement in their institutions. For example, the Headmaster of Mfantsipim School in Cape Coast was dismissed, and the Headmistress of St Monica’s Girls Secondary School Mampong, Ashanti, came under official pressure, when they would both not support the formation of the GYP in their respective schools.<sup>57</sup>

**9.3.2.4** In general, the relationship between Christian religious bodies and governments has been fairly respectful and cordial. Since Independence, Christian religious leaders have been accorded a high position in the Ghanaian socio-political context, and they have been influential in various areas, particularly in the provision of schools and the moral formation of the citizenry.

---

<sup>57</sup> Pobee, supra, p.131.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.2.5** There were a few occasions when the churches openly protested actions that they believed to be blasphemous, during President Nkrumah's administration. In particular, the churches were unhappy with the messianic ascriptions that were used in adulation of the President. After his statue of about 20 feet had been erected in front of the Old Parliament House in Accra, with the inscription, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you", the Christian Council, found it necessary to challenge this. This was because the inscription was an adaptation of the biblical quotation, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>58</sup> The Christian Council of Ghana sent a letter, dated 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1958, to the Minister for Works, E. K. Bensah, asking him to remove the quotation from the statue of Dr Nkrumah and substitute it with a non-biblical inscription. Threats were issued from the government that such an action from the Christian Council was an offence against the provisions of the Avoidance of Discrimination Act. The government further tried to silence the Christian Council by accusing it of carrying out a political agenda.

**9.3.2.6** On 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1960, the programme for the celebration of Republic Day included the pouring of libation to solicit spiritual protection. The Christian Churches considered this as idolatry and unacceptable and therefore protested against it, even though Ghana was a secular State. The churches felt that if spiritual protection had to be sought, then it had to be according to Christian practice and teachings.

**9.3.2.7** There were many instances in which people sought to deify Dr. Nkrumah. In fact, there emerged a cult of President Nkrumah that was nurtured by the CPP. Part of the practices of this cult in its deification of Dr. Nkrumah was to ascribe several appellations to Nkrumah. Such appellations included "Osagyefo"<sup>59</sup>, "Kantamanto"<sup>60</sup>, "Oyeadeeyie,"<sup>61</sup> "Kasapreko,"<sup>62</sup> "Asuo'dumgya,"<sup>63</sup> and even "The Messiah." The churches frowned on these appellations, which seemed to elevate President Nkrumah above other mortals.

**9.3.2.8** The people of Ghana were subjected to propaganda that suggested that President Nkrumah's emergence was more extraordinary than the emergence of Buddha, Jesus Christ and the Prophet Mohammed. In an editorial of the *Evening News*<sup>64</sup> was the inscription, "All day, all night we are reinforced in our belief that the whole phenomena [sic] of Dr. Nkrumah's emergence is second to none in the long history of the world messiah from Buddha, Mohammed and Christ." To enhance that image, there were continued appellations in the media and on various platforms. For example, Dr. Nkrumah was alleged to have gone to the wilderness for spiritual

<sup>58</sup> *The Holy Bible* (King James Version) Matthew Chapter 6 verse 33.

<sup>59</sup> 'Conqueror in battle'.

<sup>60</sup> 'One who does not go back on his word'.

<sup>61</sup> 'One who sets right what is wrong'.

<sup>62</sup> 'One whose word is final'.

<sup>63</sup> 'Water that is powerful enough to quench a raging fire'.

<sup>64</sup> *Evening News*, vol. III, no 636, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1960, p.2.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

exercise just as Jesus Christ did. Again, according to the *Evening News*, just as John the Baptist heralded the Mission of Christ on earth, Dr. Nkrumah's emergence was also said to have been foretold by Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey. The *Evening News* in a report captioned: "The Seven Days in the Wilderness", and "Nkrumah in the Hour of Transfiguration"<sup>65</sup>, graphically compared Dr. Nkrumah and Christ. Dr. Nkrumah was also considered martyr par excellence by J R P Marutle in the following poem:

For your sake he was imprisoned;  
 For your sake he deliberately plunged himself into supreme sacrifice  
 by declaring Positive Action at a time he knew fully well the  
 imperialists would hit back;  
 For your sake he suffered shame and degradation;  
 For your sake he abandoned law and came at the call of the UGCC;  
 For your sake he has incurred the hatred of imperialist hypocrites and  
 all who do not want the common man to have a place under the sun;  
 For your sake he was tortured, suffered persecution, libel cases,  
 contempt of court and all sorts and manners of injustices;  
 For your sake his residence at New Town was bombarded by an  
 executive officer... of the opposition.<sup>66</sup>

This poem is just an extended parody of the biblical exhortation, "For your sake, he was crucified." Some began to sing Dr. Nkrumah's praises by substituting some words of the Canticle "*Te Deum Laudamus*". All these acts of deification offended the churches.

**9.3.2.9** On 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1961, the CPP Member of Parliament for East Nzema, J A Kinnah, announced that a "shrine" should be built to the name of President Nkrumah, in Nkroful, President Nkrumah's hometown, in the Western Region of Ghana. These ideas did not sit well with the Christian Council of Ghana<sup>67</sup>, especially as P K K Quaidoo, CPP Member of Parliament for Amenfi Aowin, who spoke against the erection as being premature was described as a "Catholic slave and hypocrite". The shrine received visits from many people who believed they were on a pilgrimage.<sup>68</sup> In 1962, about 100 members of the GY P from all the regions of Ghana went on pilgrimage to the shrine where they kept an all-night vigil, and organised a route march.<sup>69</sup> The Christian Council felt that the adulation of the President had gone too far and was becoming idolatry. The last straw that broke the camel's back was when President Nkrumah was called "The Messiah" and children of the GYP were seen as being indoctrinated into a cult that upheld the immortality and infallibility of the President.

<sup>65</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, First Series, National Assembly Official Report, 1960-61 session, 18<sup>th</sup> April-23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1961, pp877-882, 891-898; *Evening News* vol. III, no. 637, Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1960, p.1.

<sup>66</sup> Pobee, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Evening News*, vol.V, no.1396, Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1962, p.1.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.2.10** Between 1957 and up to the overthrow of the CPP Government in 1966, the Christian religious bodies mainly played a human rights advocacy role under the name of the Christian Council of Ghana. The Catholic Church also later joined in this crusade. During this era, the issues of concern included the introduction of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA), the Deportation Act and the bomb-throwing outrages that resulted in many deaths, especially those of GYP, in the 1960s.

**9.3.2.11** The Christian Council put in a lot of effort to stop Parliament from passing the Preventive Detention Bill, but the Bill was rushed through Parliament in July and passed. Later, in a letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, Rev G Thackray Eddy, the retiring Chairman of both the Christian Council of Ghana and of The Methodist Church, Ghana, wrote to the Prime Minister, Dr. Nkrumah, indicating the council's concern over the PDA. Indeed, later that month of January, 1960, Reverend Eddy wrote another letter stating the following:

The council believed the bill to be contrary to natural justice, which requires that any accused person should be given an opportunity to defend himself face to face with his accusers. The letter further indicated that the bill would discourage free and honest criticism and that it would cause people to live in apprehension.

The Prime Minister in response stated:

I am satisfied that my party and government have taken their stand in this matter from a realistic point, and I am unable to advise them to shift their ground. I think that if the Christian Council and the churches want the Preventive Detention Act to be withdrawn, it should be their duty first of all to take positive steps to remove the causes, which led to the passing of the Act. As long as they have not done so, my colleagues and I cannot see that you and your colleagues have any right at all, moral, or otherwise, to intervene in this matter.

Dr. Nkrumah thus rejected the concern expressed by the Christian Council.

**9.3.2.12** In 1962, the Christian Council expressed the concern of its members on the assassination attempt made on President Nkrumah. A press release by the council after he escaped assassination at Kulungugu read in part as follows:

The Christian Council of Ghana meeting at Accra on the September 14, 1962, reaffirms the Majesty and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, realizing that he is still in control. The Council rejoices in the President's escape from assassination. The Council strongly condemns the recent acts of violence and has shown their sympathy in a practical way by giving the sum of (£G150) One Hundred and Fifty Ghanaian Pounds towards the relief of those who suffered. The Christian Council recognizes the right of the churches to affirm its conviction that the church has its duty to speak on any

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

issue, which affects the spiritual and moral welfare of its members and the nation in general.

**9.3.2.13** The Christian Council followed up with a personal letter to the President on his lucky escape, and the following response was received a few days later:

Donation for the relief of Kulungugu victims: I am directed by Osagyefo to acknowledge on his behalf receipt of your letter dated September 15, 1962. Osagyefo also wishes me to convey through you the Christian Council of Ghana an expression of his deep gratitude for its very handsome contribution towards the relief of the Kulungugu victims.

**9.3.2.14** In the early part of 1960, Bishop Andrew van den Bronk, the Catholic Bishop of Kumasi, fell foul of some people due to his utterances, perceived to be anti-government. He was attacked in the press as indulging in “crook politics”. In a write-up captioned “Bishop Bronk Must Go,”<sup>70</sup> Rev V G Kobina-Mensah, of the Church of Africa, Accra, urged his expulsion from Ghana. It is also believed that some people, even of the Catholic Church, wanted an indigene as bishop of Kumasi, were therefore behind the political situation of the time, to compel his departure. His house was actually attacked with dynamite on one occasion. He eventually became a victim of the Deportation Act. There is no evidence that the Christian Council offered any visible support to the beleaguered Bishop.

**9.3.2.15** However, when in October, 1962, the Deportation Act was used against Rt Rev Roseveare, the Christian Council took up the matter. A letter was sent to President Nkrumah pleading for Roseveare’s return. The result was his return to Ghana in November, 1962, upon which the Christian Council sent the following telegram of gratitude:

On behalf of Ghana Christian Council, we request you to kindly convey to Osagyefo the President warmest gratitude for graciously granting council’s humble petition and permitting Bishop Roseveare’s return. This most generous gesture will rejoice the heart of multitudes of Christians throughout Ghana and in many other Lands. We pray for the Almighty God’s continued guidance, support and blessing for Osagyefo.<sup>71</sup>

**9.3.2.16** The Christian Council of Ghana, in collaboration with the Joint Provincial Council and the Asanteman Council, also protested the deportation of some Muslims leaders including Alhaji Amadu Baba, Lardan Lalemie<sup>72</sup>, Salami Lagos, Aliu Allao, Musa Derikikiyi, Idris Braimah and Sam Moshie<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, Vol. 1182 Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1961, p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Memorandum to the National Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Graphic* Vol.2154 Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1957, p.8.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs, the Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951-1960*, Reimmer-Accra; Ohio University Press-Athens, 2000, p.105.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9****9.3.3 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 1966 - 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 1969  
NATIONAL LIBERATION COUNCIL (NLC)**

**9.3.3.1** In March, 1966, the Christian Council of Ghana held a non-denominational service at the Accra Sports Stadium, following the overthrow of the CPP Government by the NLC. It was a Thanksgiving Service to thank God for liberating the country from the one-party rule of the CPP Government. This gesture and the accompanying message of the Christian Council was, undoubtedly, a show of support for the coming into power of the NLC.

**9.3.3.2** Following the overthrow, CPP office holders and other government functionaries were detained without trial. Indeed, one of the security men of President Nkrumah, Boye Moses, was put in a cage and paraded through the principal streets of Accra, amidst public ridicule. The security apparatus of the President had been so feared and hated, that no one gave a thought as to what ill-treatment was being meted out to those who constituted it; and so no one, not even the Churches, condemned this undignified treatment of a human being, and the violation of Boye Moses' human rights, in particular.<sup>74</sup>

**9.3.3.3** On 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1967, there was an attempt to overthrow the Government of NLC and as result Lt-Gen Kotoka , Capt Cephas Y. Borkloe, Capt Anthony Avevor and Sgt Osei Grushie, the personal Orderly of Lt-Gen Kotoka, were killed. The leaders of the attempted coup, Lt Samuel B Arthur and Lt Moses Yeboah, were subsequently executed in public on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1967. This was the first public execution to be carried out in Ghana. The Christian Council protested against the public execution of Lt Arthur and Lt Yeboah. An excerpt of the letter of protest sent by the Christian Council to the NLC read as follows:

Sir,

Holding of Executions in Public: At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Christian Council, on May 16,1967, the subject was discussed and we were made aware that many members of the churches and of the general public, were profoundly distressed that the public should have been involved to witness the execution of the Lieutenants Arthur and Yeboah on May 9. There was no questioning of the verdicts and sentences on these men, but the Executive agreed with the view that holding the executions in public encourage crude demonstrations of hatred and excites morbid curiosity in the on-lookers and in the public at large.

---

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Graphic*, Vol.5075 Tuesday, 24th January, 1967, p.1.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.3.4** In view of the possibility of other executions, the Executive Committee asked that these views should be made known to the NLC in a letter to be presented by a delegation of church leaders. In reply to the above, the NLC sent the following:

Dear Sir,  
I am directed to acknowledge with thanks, the receipt of your memorandum on the above subject dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 1967, and to assure you that the council has no intention of carrying out, in the near future, any execution in public.

There were no further public executions during the NLC regime.

**9.3.4** **1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 1969 – 12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1972:  
THE SECOND REPUBLIC PROGRESS PARTY (PP) GOVERNMENT**

**9.3.4.1** The leaders of the Christian religious bodies did not approve the overthrow of the Government of the Progress Party under Dr. Busia. This was because Dr. Busia was generally considered to be a good Christian and a God-fearing leader. However, a few incidents occurred which called for critical comment from the churches, such as the mode of implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order, and the dismissal of the 568 senior civil and public servants. There is no evidence of the churches' official protest to these events that caused such human suffering.

**9.3.5** **13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1972 – 3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE, 1979:  
NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL (NRC) /  
SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) I & II**

**9.3.5.1** Soon after Col Acheampong seized power from the government of the Second Republic in 1972, his style of administration became suspect in the eyes of the leaders of the Christian religious bodies. The government launched the "Operation Feed Yourself" programme which was very popular with the entire citizenry. Members of the NRC also embarked on a programme of instilling discipline in the Ghanaian body politics. Although this entailed the use of force and unorthodox methods, such as military-style drills, the churches did not disapprove because falling standards of discipline within the Ghanaian social life had been one of their constant themes since 1966.

**9.3.5.2** As the same economic problems that led to the overthrow of the Progress Party re-emerged, opposition to the continued stay in office by the Military began also began to coalesce. In addition, to the economic mismanagement, the growth of *kalabule* and the attendant degeneration in moral standards roused the Christian religious bodies to action. They began to send Memoranda and Joint Pastoral Letters to the government, expressing concern over the emerging social problems. They also began to preach against the immoral lifestyles that were emerging and the social consequences of such immorality.



**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.5.3** The change in structure of National Redemption Council to Supreme Military Council merely changed the membership but not the policies or the lifestyles of which the churches had been so critical. The Chairman of NRC and the new SMC, now General Acheampong, began to court the disfavour of the Orthodox Churches.

**9.3.5.4** The Christian Council of Ghana, and the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference opposed Gen Acheampong's proposal for the formation of a Union Government (Unigov). This was to be a constitutional government, which was to have representation of the Armed Forces, the Police and civilians. The two religious bodies saw it as an attempt to perpetuate military rule in the country. As time went by, anti-military sentiments of the church leaders became more vehement, because of serious human rights abuses then being perpetrated by the government.

**9.3.5.5** As wanton arrests and beatings continued, heads of the Christian Council and the Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a joint memorandum of protest, after a meeting with Gen Acheampong in which they protested against acts of arbitrary arrests. They specifically, protested the arrest and detention of K Addai-Mensah, National Secretary of the Ghana Bar Association, in Kumasi on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1978; the brutal beating up of Peter Owusu Donkor, Headmaster of Opoku Ware Secondary School, as well as the Assistant Headmaster and students of Opoku Ware Secondary School; and students of Mfantshipim School in Cape Coast respectively, by supporters of the concept of Unigov. The Memorandum also protested the denial of such basic human rights as the freedom of speech and of association to the citizenry.

**9.3.5.6** A pastoral letter by the Catholic Bishops' Conference condemned the human rights violations perpetrated by members of the security forces;<sup>75</sup> and more particularly, complained about the denial of freedom of expression to such civil society organization as the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice (PMFJ) during the months preceding the referendum on the Unigov concept. The repression of the PMFJ was criticised as being the antithesis of government pronouncements on public education on the concept of Unigov, since the law-enforcement agencies should have been the ones to give protection to the PMFJ, and not the ones to lead in the molestation of citizens expressing their dissent. The pastoral letter also protested against the biased nature of the campaign, which was supposed to educate people on the impending referendum, as evidenced by the fact that members of the government and other personalities were either openly campaigning on behalf of Unigov or the so-called National Government.

**9.3.5.7** In order to promote the concept of Unigov and to give it some spiritual backing in order to hoodwink the ordinary citizen of its divine origin, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, also known as Mother Prophet, of the Summit Lighthouse of the Keepers of the Flame Fraternity of Southern California, was invited to Ghana by Gen Acheampong's

---

<sup>75</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak* supra, pp. 20-24.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

government in January, 1978. She re-defined and expounded the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in terms of Unigov. She urged that the Unigov was to be accepted, because it demonstrated the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The Armed Forces represented God the Father, the Police represented God the Son, and the Civilians represented God the Holy Spirit, leading people to confer the nickname ‘APC’<sup>76</sup> on her version of the Unigov concept.<sup>77</sup> She even discovered a “fourth person of the Trinity” in the Mother of God, represented by the Women of Ghana<sup>78</sup>. She therefore exploited the Christian religion to support the new political concept of governance of General Acheampong. The Christian Council vehemently expressed disagreement with Mrs. Clare Prophet and on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1978, issued the following statement:

The Christian Council wishes to express its disagreement with the religious and constitutional opinions of Mrs. Clare Prophet ...She was ill-advised to make a statement about Christian belief which has no basis in the Bible and in the tradition...We deplore that whereas the place of the army and the police in any future government is a controversial issue, Mrs. Clare Prophet took the opportunity to claim on behalf of the soldiers and police among others a “divine right”, no less, to participate in government. The Christian Council wishes to declare that no individual or section of the public has any divine or other right to participate in government except by the choice of the electorate freely expressed through the ballot box.

In the light of this, the orthodox churches boycotted all activities of Mrs. Clare Prophet’s two-day seminar<sup>79</sup>.

**9.3.5.8** The role of the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference, established the Orthodox Churches also as credible reconcilers of warring factions in society as was evident during Gen Acheampong’s regime. For example, their mediatory role in the clash between the Ghana Registered Nurses Association and the government, and between university students and the government,<sup>80</sup> showed them in a positive light. They, on many occasions, established themselves as the voice of the voiceless, pleading for the cause of political detainees, and in this role earned the wrath of Gen Acheampong. According to the Christian organisations, “the church’s task is to protect and defend the rights of every human being and to protest against the violation of these rights by any fellow man or woman.”<sup>81</sup> It is possible to conclude from the events of those days that during the Acheampong regime, the orthodox churches were by virtue of circumstances, dragged into the political life of the country<sup>82</sup>. In a nutshell, when the orthodox churches opposed General

<sup>76</sup> APC is a common analgesic in Ghana.

<sup>77</sup> Mike Oquaye, *Politics in Ghana 1972-1979*, Tornado Publications, Accra, 1980, p.86.

<sup>78</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, Vol. 6,256, Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1978, pp.1&3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, Vol. 6,250 Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1978, pp.1.

<sup>80</sup> Pobee, op cit supra.

<sup>81</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak*, pp. 20-24.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum sent to the Government by the Christian Council of Ghana and the National Catholic Secretariat on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1978.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

Acheampong's regime, they were accused of meddling in politics. The same accusation was, however, not heard when the orthodox churches intervened on behalf of the government in disputes.

### **9.3.6 GEN ACHEAMPONG'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES**

**9.3.6.1** It was impossible for General Acheampong to influence and win the support of the leadership of the Orthodox Churches of Ghana, during his campaign to popularize the Unigov idea. He therefore turned his attention to the new Pentecostal Churches. He found ready allies in the leaders of the "spiritual churches." He went as far as attending their church services and this gave him the opportunity to launch his campaign on the Unigov either personally from the pulpits of these churches, or through the church leaders<sup>83</sup>.

**9.3. 6.2** As a result, some individual religious leaders were driven by personal ambition to seek public office. In view of this, some of the spiritual church leaders were placed in high positions and this enabled them to campaign for General Acheampong's Unigov. For example Rev Dr Blankson Amankwa, leader and founder of the Bethany Church of Ghana, and Presiding Director of the National Christian Ministers' Union, also belonged to *The Friends*, one of the pro- Unigov political organs of Gen Acheampong,<sup>84</sup> was appointed Chairman of the University Council of the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. When in 1974, Bishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Catholic Bishop of Kumasi, declined to serve on the Charter of Redemption Committee, it was Rev Charles Yeboah-Koree, founder and leader of F'Eden Church, and an ardent supporter of Unigov, who was appointed in his stead<sup>85</sup> as a member of the National Committee of the Charter of Redemption. Rev Yeboah-Koree at the Easter Convention of his church at the Jackson Park in Koforidua, asked his congregation to endorse Unigov, since it was divinely inspired. They were also to use divine wisdom and power to influence the next constitutional committee<sup>86</sup>. He went on to say:

To balance the moral and political imbalance of the present and the past, Ghanaians must be committed to the search for God's divine plans, for, in it alone can one enjoy lasting peace.

**9.3.6.3** On several other occasions, Rev. Yeboah Koree went on national television to proclaim Unigov during his televised sermons. There were many others in the pentecostal churches, who saw Unigov as a revelation from God. Examples of these were Rev Dr KO Thompson, one of the leaders of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church

<sup>83</sup> *The Pioneer*, March, 1977.

<sup>84</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol.6250, Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1978, p.1.

<sup>85</sup> Pobee, op cit supra.

<sup>86</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6315, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1978, p.16.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

of Ghana, Takoradi<sup>87</sup>, and Rev Francis Walters of the African Religious Congress.<sup>88</sup> Some also joined secular groups to campaign for the concept of Unigov.

**9.3.7 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1979 – 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER, 1979:  
ARMED FORCES REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL**

**9.3.7.1** The 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1979 coup brought untold hardship to many Ghanaians for the first time in the annals of Ghana's political life. The AFRC regime lasted for only three-and-a-half months, but it perpetrated widespread human rights violations dubbed 'house cleaning', in the nature of killings, beatings, flogging in public, seizure of property and detentions. Some religious leaders pledged open support for the "house cleaning" exercise by the AFRC Government, and even called for its extension to other social sectors.

**9.3.7.2** However, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana hoped that the AFRC would not resort to unreasonable force in the execution of the 'house cleaning' campaign. Other individual church leaders such as Bishop Dominic Andoh showed concern about the acts of atrocities committed by the AFRC. The Catholic Church denounced violence of all kinds and protested vehemently to the arbitrary killings that took place. There was also a strong affirmation that each Ghanaian had the right to security of life and legitimate prosperity. Each Ghanaian was bound by the divine commandment, "Thou Shall Not Kill." In a joint memorandum, submitted to the AFRC in July, 1979, however, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council merely expressed the hope that the 'house cleaning' exercise embarked upon by the AFRC would be pursued without recourse to acts of vengeance and violence.

**9.3.7.3** The AFRC executed eight Senior Military Officers, including three former Heads of State, in two batches. After the second batch of executions, the leaders of the Christian Council and the National Catholic Secretariat were among the other civil society groups that appealed for justice to be tempered with mercy. However, there were other members of the clergy, who supported the execution. Such supporters included priests such as Rev Fr Dr. Vincent Kwabena Damuah of the Catholic Church, who wrote:

We do not love those executed less but we love our country more. Why all the fuss about execution? I believe that the A.F.R.C has the right to exact capital punishment for the common good of the country. We hope and pray that the number is not too large. Christ died on the cross to save mankind. We hope and pray that those who have to die, accept the challenge courageously and prayerfully to save Ghana.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6247 Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1978, p.2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ghanaian Times*, vol. 6249 Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1978, p.3.

<sup>89</sup> *The Standard*, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1979, p.3.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.7.4** *The Standard*, a Catholic Weekly, also expressed similar views on the executions as a way of ensuring social justice in the future. In an editorial under the heading: “The Great Lesson,” it stated the following with reference to the executions at the Teshie Range

:

The sordid history surrounding the notorious second military regime, which put itself in power in 1972, has come to a close. The disciplinary action has been taken by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council in public to serve as deterrent to anybody who goes about clinging on to power to amass illegal wealth and put Ghanaians into the economic predicament in which we find ourselves today.<sup>90</sup>

**9.3.7.5** The seizure of assets of a large number of people, the demolition of private houses and the establishment of “People’s Courts” to try people in secret for various alleged crimes against the state, received public support. Although there was very little information on the operations of these “People’s Courts,” no one demanded an open trial for the supposed offenders.

**9.3.7.6** The AFRC Government had the shortest life-span in the annals of governance of this country. However, the atrocities perpetrated under this regime were phenomenal. The killing of the Senior Military Officers, the public flogging of people, some of whom were stripped naked, the seizure and destruction of people’s property, were enough instances of human rights violations that caused great concern in the country. In the main, the Christian Religious Bodies protested against such acts of inhumanity.

**9.3.8** **24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 1979 – 30<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 1981:  
PEOPLE’S NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) GOVERNMENT**

**9.3.8.1** There were very few occasions on which the churches had cause to protest against government action. One of those occasions was when the government mounted overt surveillance Capt Kojo Tsikata. *The Standard* criticised the flagrant violation of the rights of Capt Tsikata.

**9.3.9.0** **31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 1981- 6<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1993  
PROVISIONAL NATIONAL DEFENCE COUNCIL**

**9.3.9.1** The Government of PNDC under Flt Lt Rawlings initiated what he described as “Holy War” on vices. The spate of violence, terror, arbitrary imprisonment and

<sup>90</sup> *The Standard*, Sunday, 24th June 1979, p.4.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

torture that characterized the early stages of the revolution attracted sharp criticism from various quarters, notably, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

**9.3.9.2** Early in the life of the PNDC, certain events occurred that caused the religious leaders to express disagreement with the government. The Catholic Church's unequivocal stand against human rights abuses was contained in a joint pastoral letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of Ghana on "Moral Conversion and National Reconstruction," issued on the occasion of the 1982 Easter celebration. This was to serve as the church's reaction to the political situation in the country at that time<sup>91</sup>. The Catholic Church denounced violence of all kinds, including the arbitrary killings that were going on, emphasizing that each Ghanaian has the right to security of life and legitimate prosperity. The church, once again affirmed that each Ghanaian is bound by the divine commandment: "Thou Shalt Not Kill".

**9.3.9.3** In separate memoranda, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference called on the PNDC Government to publish the interim report submitted to the Attorney General by the Special Investigation Board, which investigated the kidnap and murder of three High Court Judges, and a retired Army Officer on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1982. They also urged the government to consider the immediate possibility of handing over power to a representative government.

**9.3.9.4** It was clear, during the PNDC period that the terror unleashed by the regime was such that only established bodies such as the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and Association of Professional Bodies were capable of collectively expressing condemnation of the regime's excesses. One Christian leader has remarked that, "It was a miracle that the leaders of the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference were able to exhibit such courage during the early 1980s and to survive the fury of Rawlings' regime." This, according to him, was due to the grace of God.<sup>92</sup>

**9.3.9.5** Rev Dr Vincent Kwabena Damuah, a Catholic Priest, became a member of the PNDC and took active part in most of the decisions during that time.<sup>93</sup> A few Ghanaian priests spoke against the membership of Rev. Damuah on the PNDC, such that social commentators were divided on the issue of the involvement of religious leaders in politics. While some believed that priests should eschew politics, others were convinced that the appropriate role for the clergy was in the advisory capacity.<sup>94</sup> Rev. Dr. Joseph Osei-Bonsu, then a lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon,

<sup>91</sup> See *Ghana Catholic Bishops Speak*, p.59.

<sup>92</sup> Memorandum to National Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>93</sup> *The Standard*, Sunday, 24th January, 1982, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> *The Standard*, Sunday, 31st January, 1982, p.1.

**VOLUME 4** CHAPTER 9

indicated that although the inclusion of a Catholic priest on the PNDC was indicative of the regime's recognition of the important contribution which the church could make to the development of the country, it would have been better if he had been appointed to an advisory role, as such participation in the government could cause a rift in his congregation. The official position of the Catholic Church was to suspend him from priestly duties.

**9.3.9.6** In November, 1982, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in its Statement on the State of the Nation, condemned the "cold-blooded, cowardly murder" of the three High Court Judges and a retired Officer of the Ghana Army, and also expressed the hope that those found guilty of the savage act would be punished.<sup>95</sup> The Statement further expressed concern about the lawlessness in the country and recklessness of the People's Defence Committees in sowing seeds of discord and bitterness in the country; the unrestrained violence of the security forces that had claimed many lives and maimed others; and the situation of insecurity created for every one<sup>96</sup> in the country.

**9.3.9.7** In a Memorandum from the member Churches of the Christian Council of Ghana to the PNDC, the churches entreated the government, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to listen and pay attention to the cries of the people. The memorandum mentioned the following atrocities:

...the numerous kidnappings, confiscation of properties, buildings, and cars without adequate enquiry or even any investigation at all...Detentions without trial of politicians and other citizens and increasing violence by progressive organizations...

**9.3.9.8** In a document entitled, "20 Points for Study," The Christian Council of Ghana mentioned other concerns including the following:

Never before in our history have so many Ghanaians disappeared in suspicious circumstances as in the period since December 31, 1981. The cases of the three judges and a retired major are typical of the other incidents including two hundred listed on the 28 July 1982 by the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies.<sup>97</sup>

These criticisms did not go down well with the government.

**9.3.9.9** *The Standard* also consistently criticised the government on the atrocities of the time. The government took umbrage at these criticisms and expressed its displeasure by banning the newspaper on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1985.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak*, p.75.

<sup>96</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak*, p.74.

<sup>97</sup> "The Christian Council and the Revolution," Christian Council press releases dated 25th November, and 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1982.

<sup>98</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak*, pp. 115-116.

**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

**9.3.9.10** In 1989, the government sought to control religious bodies by requiring that all religious bodies should be registered under the Religious Bodies Registration Law, 1989 (PNDCL 221). The Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council informed the Chairman of PNDC, by a joint memorandum on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1989, of their displeasure at that law and refused to register under the Law. The message explained to the Chairman and members of the PNDC that the law constituted an infringement on the fundamental human rights of the basic freedom of worship as stated by article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The message further alleged that the Law also contravened article 8 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and even the government's own enabling Law, the Provisional National Defence Council (Establishment) Proclamation (Supplementary and Consequential Provisions) Law 1982, (PNDCL 42). Section 1(b) of PNDCL 42 which provided as follows: "Respect for fundamental human rights and for the dignity of human persons are to be cultivated among all sections of the society and established as part of the basis of social justice." The religious bodies believed that the registration requirement was the first step in a bid to deny legal existence to those bodies that the PNDC might not favour. The Christian Religious Bodies in keeping with the ethics of rendering "service to mankind" protested against all the above-mentioned incidents of human rights abuses.

**9.3.9.11** In the same year of 1989, four religious groups made up of the "Jehovah's Witnesses", "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints", "The Lord is My Shepherd" Church, Kumasi and Prophet Ekwam's Church at Gomoa Budumburam were proscribed. The Orthodox Churches protested in meetings with the government, on their behalf. In particular, the ban on those groups demonstrated the importance of resisting the registration requirements being introduced, since that would have given power to governments to determine questions of doctrine and religious orthodoxy.

**9.4 CONCLUSION**

**9.4.1** The CPP Government was generally regarded as dictatorial. The NLC Government was therefore described as a "liberator," when it overthrew the CPP Government. Even though it was an unlawful take-over of power by force of arms, the Christian religious organizations supported it.<sup>99</sup>

**9.4.2** Even though numerous acts of brutality took place during the initial period of the NLC regime, public protests against such acts were minimal. Furthermore, a number of laws were promulgated to disqualify some people from contesting or holding public office. Notable among these laws were the Elections and Public Officers Disqualification Decree, 1968 (NLCD 223), and the Public Officers Disqualification Decree of 1969 (NLCD 332), which disqualified 152 CPP

---

<sup>99</sup> *Christian Messenger* March, 1966.



**VOLUME 4 CHAPTER 9**

functionaries from holding public office for ten years, and prevented them from contesting elections to public office. The failure of Ghanaians in general, and Christian Religious Bodies in particular, to protest against these discriminatory and unduly punitive laws gave the impression that these laws were justified.

**9.4.3** During this period, a number of laws were made that took retrospective effect, but this did not elicit any protest.

**9.4.4** The religious bodies did not have open clashes with the Governments of the Second and Third Republics. There was, however, at various times, tension between the Christian Religious Bodies notably, the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana on the one hand and on the other, the Governments of NRC, SMC, AFRC and the PNDC.

**9.4.5** From the facts outlined above, it is clear that Christian religious bodies have clashed with various governments that ruled Ghana. This was because of the particular stance that they took on certain human rights abuses perpetrated by these governments. In pursuance of their advocacy role, the religious bodies have engaged in activities in the form of issuing protest letters, communiqués, memoranda, pastoral letters etc. For example, the Christian Council of Ghana, and the Ghana National Catholic Secretariat have often spoken with one voice on matters that they considered worthy of such joint action.<sup>100</sup> It is worth noting that, not much has been heard from the Islamic Religious groups in an advocacy capacity, and the Traditional Religious groups have played no advocacy role at all.

**9.4.6** Religious bodies have members in every stratum of society. Consequently, the opinions and actions of the leaders of these bodies shape public morality and behaviour. The 'culture of silence' that pervaded the political fabric of Ghana during the days of the PNDC, had a serious impact on the advocacy role of the Christian religious bodies. All the same, the Christian religious bodies especially, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference were always persistent and consistent in criticizing governments on human rights issues.

**9.4.7** Instances of religious groups seriously engaging governments in terms of protests and other actions on human rights issues have been commendable, even though on a few occasion such protests fell short of expectation. On issues such as the Preventive Detention Act, the bomb outrages of the 1960s, the killing of the Senior Military Officers, the flogging of citizens in public, the demolition of public properties, the disappearance of certain individuals, and the abduction and gruesome murder of the three High Court Judges and a retired Officer of the Ghana Army, have all elicited protest from them.

---

<sup>100</sup> See *Ghana Bishops Speak*, Department of Social Communications (DEPSOCOM) of the National Catholic Secretariat from 1968-1990, 1999), pp. 43.

**VOLUME 4** CHAPTER 9

**9.4.8** It is hoped that now that some of the traditional religious groups are organized under the Afrikania Mission, they would be more vocal in speaking out on national issues as well as reforming some of their practices that constitute human rights abuse.

**9.4.9** The Muslim groups should also be heard more on matters of human rights, so that the task of infusing morality into our governance would not be left to the Christian groups only. Already there are hopeful signs that the need to ingratiate themselves with ruling government has become a thing of the past, and so this should enable them to criticize the government whenever the need arises.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>NRC</b>	–	National Reconciliation Commission
<b>MAP</b>	–	Muslim Association Party
<b>CPP</b>	–	Convention peoples Party
<b>GCMA</b>	–	Gold Coast Muslim Association
<b>NRC/SMC</b>	–	National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council
<b>GMRC</b>	–	Ghana Muslim Representative Council
<b>UGMRC</b>	–	United Ghana Muslim Representative Council
<b>UNIGOV</b>	–	Union Government
<b>PNP</b>	–	Peoples National Party
<b>AFRC</b>	–	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
<b>WISC</b>	–	World Islamic Call Society
<b>PDA</b>	–	Preventive Detention Act
<b>NLC</b>	–	National Liberation Council
<b>NLCD</b>	--	National Liberation Council Decree
<b>PMFJ</b>	–	Peoples Movement for Freedom and Justice
<b>NPP</b>	–	Northern Peoples Party
<b>PNDCL</b>	–	Provisional National Defence Council Law