

Christianity: An Attack on the True African Identity in Anyidoho's *Go Tell Jesus* and Awoonor's *The Cathedral*.

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Abstract

In *Colonial Africa*, Falola cites Tishkin's argument that missionaries weakened indigenous culture, enforced colonial law, and used Christianity to project the supernatural power of the white man, thereby undermining African spiritual authority. As a result, many Africans became Christianized and Europeanized, losing their cultural identity. Consequently, much of African literature reflects the effects of slavery, colonialism, Christianity, and neo-colonialism on the continent's people. Within this tradition, Anyidoho's *Go Tell Jesus* and Awoonor's *The Cathedral* express grievances and protest against the destruction of the authentic African milieu.

Adopting a postcolonial literary perspective and purposive sampling, this paper qualitatively examines the two poems. The study reveals that both works portray Christianity as usurping the peace and unity sustained by African faith, thereby serving as a critique of European incursion. It also observes tonal variations, with the persona in *Go Tell Jesus* adopting a sarcastic voice while *The Cathedral* conveys an aggressive and harsh tone. The paper concludes that Anyidoho and Awoonor employ poetry as a form of cultural resistance, depicting Christianity as a disruptive force that distorted spiritual truth and eroded indigenous identity. Through diverse poetic devices the poets heighten their critique in *Go Tell Jesus* mirror the instability of missionary discourse. *The Cathedral* also evokes misfortune, underscoring the destructive impact of European incursion. The paper recommends further research into the imagery of both poets to deepen understanding of African identity in their works and expand existing scholarship.

Keywords: African Identity, Christianized, Europeanized, African Traditional Religion, Attack, Resistance.

DOI: 10.7176/JLLL/108-05

Publication date: October 31st 2025

1. Introduction

African literary writers have long played a pivotal role in depicting the socio-cultural and spiritual dislocations occasioned by colonial encounters, particularly through the introduction of Christianity. As Coulter et al. (2024) observe, Christian missionaries were often perceived as agents of colonialism, operating in close alignment with, and at times under the directive of, colonial administrations. This perception, they argue, arose partly from the fact that both missionaries and colonial officials originated from the same geographical and cultural background. Consequently, many indigenous communities came to regard Christianity not as an independent spiritual enterprise but rather as an ally. Boahen (1987) corroborates this assertion, adding that with the close connection that missionaries had with the colonial government, particularly in the sphere of Western education, it should not be surprising that the European missionaries were seen as agents of colonialism in all things good and bad.

Cornelissen (1997) observes that much of African literature from the late 1960s explores themes of cultural conflict and economic transformation during the colonial period, addressing the social and political implications of colonialism and the struggles of individuals caught within its structures. It is therefore not surprising that canonical works such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* and *Weep Not Child*, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Ukala's *Iredi War*, Aidoo's *Anowa*, and Ben Abdallah's *The Slaves* foreground the consequences of colonial domination and the slave trade, often dramatizing the identity crises experienced by their protagonists.

One genre that vividly registers the effects of Christianity on African identity is poetry. Poets such as Kofi Awoonor, Kofi Anyidoho, David Diop, and Birago Diop, through their artistic craft, interrogate the destabilizing impact of colonisation and its twin ally, Christianity, on indigenous African belief systems. For instance, Anyidoho's anthology *My Earth, My Child* underscores the profound dislocations—spiritual, cultural, and communal—that accompanied missionary activity.

This paper, therefore investigates selected poems by Awoonor and Anyidoho to demonstrate how the introduction of Christianity constituted a significant challenge to African religious and cultural identity, and how poetry became a medium of protest and resistance. For the purpose of this study, the term “true African identity” refers specifically to pre-Christian religious practices and worldviews, rather than encompassing broader cultural dimensions. By adopting this focus, the paper situates Awoonor and Anyidoho within the larger tradition of postcolonial writers who use literature to articulate resistance to colonial incursions and to affirm the enduring relevance of indigenous belief systems.

2.0 Research Objectives

1. To examine how Kofi Anyidoho's *Go Tell Jesus* and Kofi Awoonor's *The Cathedral* portray Christianity as a disruptive force against traditional African religious identity.
2. To analyze the literary and stylistic devices employed by both poets in articulating resistance to missionary and colonial influence.
3. To contribute to postcolonial discourse by situating Anyidoho and Awoonor within the broader tradition of African writers who use literature to critique Christianity's impact on indigenous belief systems.

2.1 Research Aim

This study aims to investigate how Kofi Anyidoho's *Go Tell Jesus* and Kofi Awoonor's *The Cathedral* portray Christianity as a disruptive force to the religious and cultural identity of the African. Specifically, it examines how both poets represent Christianity as an attack on indigenous traditions, the poetic and stylistic strategies they employ to articulate resistance, and the symbolic significance of structural and numerical features within the poems. In doing so, the paper interrogates how these texts contribute to postcolonial discourse by situating Anyidoho and Awoonor within the broader tradition of African writers who critique Christianity's impact on indigenous belief systems, while also expanding critical perspectives on the contestation and preservation of African identity.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by the Postcolonial literary theory. This theory enables one to present a systematic way of understanding the vitality of African identity vis-à-vis Christianity. As a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions. This theory convincingly explains why Christianity has largely affected the African identity and has somehow succeeded in supplanting the African tradition and the African identity as it emphasizes the voices and experiences of formerly colonized peoples and challenges Eurocentric interpretations. The postcolonial theory seeks to understand the operations of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies. That is to say that it examines ideologies that may be political, social, cultural, and psychological in literature. According to Tyson (2006), a good postcolonial criticism analyses the ideological forces that, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself. Central to postcolonial theory is the concept of *othering*—how colonized peoples were constructed as inferior “others” to justify colonial subjugation. Postcolonial theory interrogates identity, power relations, language, and representation within the colonial and postcolonial context it also critiques how colonial legacies persist in contemporary global relations and cultural production, calling for decolonization of knowledge and culture. This led to a loss of identity and rootless existence as the colonized plunged into psychological traumas following this exercise. He says

‘...This feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha and others as unhomeliness (Tyson 2006, p.421).

In the same way, Loomba (2002) relays that post colonialism examines the clash of cultures in which one deems itself to be the superior one and imposes its practices on the less powerful one. Similarly, Jamshed (2023) also contends that postcolonial studies explore how the colonized people tend to internalize certain stereotypes and racist beliefs about themselves. This inhuman treatment is embedded in the concept of ‘other’. According to Tyson (2006), this phenomenon of ‘othering’ dehumanizes the colonizers as it allows them to depict themselves as a superior human being and those who are different as inferior subhuman human beings. The study demonstrates how African poets deploy poetic strategies to demonstrate their aversion towards some of the beliefs that contradict the beliefs of the Africans and hence the suitable theory is the postcolonial theory.

3.1 Methodology

The interpretivist paradigm was used for this study. According to Shah and Al-Bargi (2013) this approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world. This is concerned with subjective meanings as it seeks to recognize the individual's interpretation and understanding of the social phenomena. This is justified for the study because the approach aided in examining the thematic concerns, structure, and poetic devices in the selected poems. The paper used a qualitative approach as a research design because it deals with investigating and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the sampling type used for this study is the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling deals with intentionally selecting informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon. Creswell (2013), opines that choosing texts for research using purposive sampling entails thinking that the texts possess characteristics that might contribute to the intended analysis. Concerning the sampled texts, they contain, exhibit, or focus on Christianity's impact on African Traditional Religion, thereby exploring the notion of Christianity as an attack on indigenous African belief systems.

Also, with the sources of data gathered for the study, the primary texts of the study are Kofi Anyidoho's *Go Tell Jesus* and Kofi Awoonor's *The Cathedral*. Secondary sources consulted were journals, reviews, books, videos, and other sources that address similar issues. Finally, this study employs a qualitative content analysis to explore how Christianity is portrayed as a force that undermines African identity in Anyidoho's "*Go Tell Jesus*" and Awoonor's "*The Cathedral*." Through close reading of selected lines, the research uncovers symbolic representations of cultural displacement, religious conflict, and identity erosion within the postcolonial African context. The analysis is grounded in textual interpretation from a literary perspective, focusing primarily on thematic concerns, structural patterns, and other poetic devices that illuminate the poets' critique of imposed religious ideologies.

3.2 Conceptualising Christianity and African Traditional Religion

According to Gonzalez (2010), Christianity is the name given to that specific set of religious beliefs and practices that Jesus Christ taught in Palestine during Tiberius' rule as Roman Emperor. According to the Holy Scriptures, following the death of Jesus Christ, a select group of His followers propagated Christianity for the benefit of the entire world. In furtherance, Little (2022) notes that the earliest expansion of Christianity was driven by missionary activities and the mobility of the Roman world where Apostles and early Christians travelled for commerce and business, contributing significantly to the spread of the faith. According to Little, Christianity appealed to marginalized groups, including women and slaves, with its message that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free and lead to a heavy propagation. Outside the Roman sphere, distinct streams of Christianity developed and spread by different routes. Syria and Nestorian forms moved east into Persia, Central Asia, and reached China in the early centuries of the Common Era, while Coptic Christianity became a major religious presence in Egypt and North, Armenia and Ethiopia adopted Christianity early and developed enduring local traditions linked to Oriental forms of Christianity (González, 2010).

In addition, Edimeh (2020) postulates that the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit invigorated Christianity. He also argues that the concepts of the Trinity, Baptism, and the Eucharist are embedded in Christianity. Similarly, Harnack (2006) in his book *What is Christianity?* throws more light on the Christian faith and explores the essential core precepts of the Christian faith. He argues that Christianity dwells on three main aspects namely the coming of the Kingdom of God, God's essence as our Father and the infinite value of the human soul, and the aim of faith being the higher righteousness. Harnack also emphasizes the Kingdom as a supernatural gift from God, filling Christians with the life of God and ruling in their hearts. However, Feuerbach (1994) opines that God is a psychological projection of human needs, and desires as well as a representation of morality, love, and understanding in society. He observes that as a society progresses, the need for this God diminishes, and belief in a divine presence can hinder the pursuit of reason and knowledge.

Even though several scholars such as González (2010) and Coulter (2024) record that Christian Missionary societies established churches, schools, and hospitals; these institutions anchored Christian communities and shaped social life in colonized regions especially Africa, there has been several accusations on the influx of Christianity on other cultures. Principal among these arguments is its attack on the African Traditional Religion. Edimeh (2020) relays that the term 'African Traditional Religion' (hence ATR) integrates a variety of religious forms in different parts of the continent of Africa. He opines that to create connections and ties with cosmic spiritual and mystical energies, Africans established a wide range of religious and social practices, rituals, and ceremonies. Similarly, Awolalu (1976) relays that ATR is a legacy from the past that is viewed as the link between the present and eternity rather than as something that belongs in the past. He also opines that it lacks reformers and founders such as Christ, Muhammad, Asoka, or Gautama the Buddha. In furtherance, he observes that it is not a single hero's faith and doesn't have any missionaries or even a desire to proselytize or spread the religion. In addition to this,

Edimeh (2020) informs that although the religion hails from different parts of Africa, he argues that there are still basic similarities that run through this religious system which includes the concept of God. He opines that God is integral in ATR as He is called by different names by its believers and that there are beliefs in ancestral worship and the concept of divinities and/or spirits. In the same way, Nwokoro (2014) confirms that in ATR, there is the belief in a Supreme Being who creates, sustains, provides, delivers, rules, and dispenses justice.

Edimeh also writes

“He is given different names and attributes and so many myths are built around Him. This God is worshipped through consultation or communion with lesser deities and ancestral spirits. These deities and spirits which are honored through sacrifices and libation have specific areas of influence in human lives.” (Edimeh 2020, p.51).

In the same manner, Boaheng (2012) corroborates this assertion by noting that numerous shrines were devoted to the lesser gods, who served as the focal point of ritualistic activities. According to Edimeh, the manifestation of powers and application of the ATR are connected to the ritual experts' practices, which involve using natural objects like plants and animals for charms, amulets, medicine, and magic. They can be utilized for both good and bad intentions. He also notes that the likes of medicine men and women, rainmakers, diviners, seers, sorcerers, witches, mediums and magicians serve as a medium between humans and their supreme being. It appears from the foregoing that ATR is characterized by a belief in a Supreme Being who is worshipped through lesser gods, these gods have intermediaries who mediate for men.

It is worthy to note that many scholars have also documented the influx of Christianity on the African identity. Boahen (1987) postulates that Christianity condemned everything African in culture—African names, music, dance, art, religion, marriage, the system of inheritance. The wearing of African clothes to school and work was also banned. It is with this circumstance that Achebe (1958) also laments

‘The white man is very clever. He came quietly with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our clan and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart’ (Achebe 1958, p.152).

Achebe shares how the presence of whites marred the Africans' communal living. In the same way, Falola (2002) postulates that Christianity's presence in Africa is a testament to the supernatural source of the white man's power and assisted in delegitimizing the indigenous sources of supernatural power such as kingship, chieftainship, and priesthood. This shares resonance with Edimeh (2020), who also opines that the missionaries failed to realize that among Africans, religion was the cement of the society that kept them united. Again, Knispel (2004) confirms that the new Christian way created conflicts with the lives of the traditional people, i.e., polygamy and ancestral worship. This aligns with what Edimeh (2020) argued that the Christian perception of religion hinges mainly on the affair between an individual's soul and his God, which contrasts with the African communal conception of religion.

3.3 Empirical Review.

It is worth noting that existing scholarship has examined the works of Kofi Awoonor and Kofi Anyidoho from different critical lenses. For instance, Traoré (2019) employs an ecocritical approach to explore representations of nature in their poetry. He concludes that the poems possess multifaceted qualities, capturing both environmental destruction and a nostalgic yearning for African cultural continuity. In a related discussion, Jovanov (2024) argues that Kofi Anyidoho and T. S. Eliot share certain modernist poetic affinities in their engagement with voice, tradition, and identity, although their methods diverge significantly due to their distinct cultural contexts. Anyidoho's poetic style remains firmly grounded in the Ewe oral tradition, incorporating indigenous rhythmic patterns and communal memory to articulate a socially responsive African modernism.

Similarly, Ofei (2023) posits that Awoonor's *“The Cathedral”* functions both as a prophetic warning and a critique of Ghana's national cathedral project, illuminating the erosion of African cultural identity and the complex interplay of religion, politics, and postcolonial identity. The poem is further interpreted within the dynamics of a “blame culture,” where colonial legacies are held responsible for contemporary socio-political challenges, sometimes overshadowing the necessity for internal accountability. Awoonor's ties to traditionalist belief systems, such as the Afrikania Mission, reinforce his critique of Christianity's pervasive dominance in Ghana.

Likewise, Onobhayedo and Bino (2023), in their article “*Traditional Religion and Modernity in Kofi Awoonor’s ‘The Cathedral,’*” assert that the poem reveals tensions arising from the imposition of Christianity and Western culture over indigenous religious and cultural identities. They argue that Awoonor underscores both the resilience of African traditions and the adverse effects of modernization that disregards cultural rootedness, ultimately framing the poem as a protest against the ongoing erasure of African identity.

Additionally, Glover-Meni and Akakpo (2020) conduct a comparative study of Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa* alongside Awoonor’s poems “*The Weaver Bird*” and “*The Cathedral*.” Their findings suggest that Awoonor employs language as a tool to reclaim African cultural pride threatened by foreign intrusion, often adopting a rebuking tone toward Africans who enable cultural alienation. Conversely, Aidoo focuses on gendered power dynamics, illustrating how traditional practices such as libation and marriage reflect community sovereignty over individual desires.

Based on the foregoing discussions, this study addresses a notable research gap by examining how Anyidoho’s “*Go Tell Jesus*” and Awoonor’s “*The Cathedral*” articulate resistance against the dismantling of authentic African cultural structures. Given the limited scholarship applying postcolonial theory to these specific texts, this study analyzes their thematic concerns, poetic structures, and stylistic devices to reveal how both poets voice their grievances and condemn cultural displacement in the postcolonial African milieu.

4.0 Summary of Selected Texts

4.1 Kofi Ayidoho’s *Go Tell Jesus*

The poem unfolds as a dialogue in which the speaker addresses messengers of Jesus (missionaries). In the conversation, the persona laments the actions of messengers who are ‘thought to know better but only end up challenging basic principles of life (equality of humanity) and the belief in the nature of God (an old man who does not care about what happens to humanity).

In addition, he invites the listener to go question Jesus about the salvation plan He has for them and the fate of those who passed away before His arrival. The persona misrepresents the message because he seeks an explanation for ‘why Jesus gave His message in parables to messengers who do not even understand the parable.’

The persona also airs his anger on the fact that he no longer enjoys his peace, he cannot sleep comfortably (both literal and literary sleep), and his children have turned against him (though it is expected that knowing the truth will make them knowledgeable). Finally, he challenges the exaggerated belief in communion as the source of peace.

4.2 Kofi Awoonor’s *The Cathedral*

The persona in *The Cathedral* deals with the physical destruction of a tree which has material and spiritual implications. The tree that is cut down is more than an ordinary tree. For the persona, the tree that was ‘a tree of life’ which supplies nourishment by dousing ‘the infant corn’, with incense. Again, the tree could protect its people by stretching across ‘a heaven’ that shelters the ‘tribe’. The persona in the closing lines laments in rage at how surveyors and builders who represent the missionaries were sent to destroy the tree and replace it with a cathedral, which is nowhere closer to the tree that was cut down. For the persona, the cathedral is ‘senseless’ and portends doom for the indigenes as it had destroyed their natural symbol of life and protection, and also an artificial creation that spells doom for the Africans.

4.3 Foregrounding Christianity and the Effect on African Identity

These two poems selected for this study express resentment towards Christianity.

In Anyidoho’s *Go Tell Jesus*, a persona raises critical issues such as Christianity attacking the traditional beliefs and values. In the poem, the speaker complains that ever since the missionaries arrived, chaos has set into his house. This imposition of a new religion on the indigene sinks with the tenets of postcolonial theory which argues that the colonized whom the missionaries are included, impose their culture unto the colonized that is the speaker. The effect of this imposition caused the colonized to lose traditional values since there was a constant condemnation of the traditional ways. The speaker admits that this attack is detrimental as it has even destroyed the traditional family bond which they enjoyed following what Jesus’ messengers evangelized to them. The poet used metonymy to embellish the poetic language. Metonymy is a literary device where an object or concept is replaced with a word closely related to or suggested by the original. In the poem, terms such as ‘messengers’ represent the missionaries who arrived to introduce Christianity. Again, ‘sons and daughters’ also connotes the

Africans or the local indigenes who were thrown into confusion following the words of the messengers.

Again, in their confusion, it comes to light that they began ‘screaming shrieking, burning... souls.’ Here, the poet employs an imagery (auditory), where the speaker reveals that following the coming of the missionaries, His ‘Sons and daughters’ have been worshipping differently, supposing referring to the tongues speaking concept of Christianity difficult for bystanders to construe. This act of shouting and screaming appeals to the sense of hearing and also depicts the confusion that happened. The speaker also reveals that his children began behaving strangely after the introduction of Christianity. ‘My sons have left their heads and hearts’. This suggests that they have literally gone crazy and somehow lack fellow feeling. The poet employs euphemism here to reduce the impact that it might have on the receiver.

This imposition which destroyed the family bond is also in consonance with what Edimeh (2020) and (Knispel, 2004) postulate that the missionaries' evangelism hinges mainly on the affair between an individual's soul and his God and this contrasts with the African communal conception of religion. That is it to mean that their activities destroyed the social bond between the people. Anyidoho employs apostrophe which a rhetorical device in which the speaker speaks to a dead or absent person, an abstraction, or an inanimate object to address this attack. In *Go Tell Jesus*, we come across several instances where apostrophe is employed. Words such as ‘Go’, ‘Go Tell Jesus’, ‘Ask him’, ‘Tell Jesus’, and ‘Tell Him’ creates the impression that the speaker had a passive listener who receives the message to carry it to Jesus. Although the listener is silent, his or her presence is still felt as he receives the order from the speaker to inquire about the nature of God and clarify the controversies and confusion surrounding the message of the messengers. Anyidoho employs apostrophes in the poem because apostrophe helps the poet emphasize his message and give his words greater power (Sayakhan, 2018). Through this mechanism, he invites his readers to share in his resentment of the indigenous ways that have been under attack following the coming of the messengers of Christ.

In furtherance, a careful examination of the poem's structure reveals a deliberate disunity in its stanzas. The first and second stanzas each contain eleven lines, the third expands significantly to twenty-seven lines, while the final stanza is reduced to only four lines. This irregular distribution is not accidental; rather, it symbolically reflects the inconsistencies and contradictions within the message proclaimed by the religious “messengers.” The disruption of structural balance visually enacts the thematic conflict in the poem, reinforcing the poet's critique of imposed doctrines that destabilize indigenous belief systems.

Not only this, the speaker also reacts to the attacks on their traditionalist way of worship. He inquires if they (traditionalists) cannot reach out to God using the lesser gods as mediators. This resonates with Boaheng (2012), who observes that traditionalists reach God through the smaller gods. The speaker seems to question or interrogate what the Christian teachings admonish that ‘no one can go to God except through Jesus Christ’. As seen in the following lines

‘Go
Go ask Jesus
Whether He really said
we cannot reach our God
If we do not pass through Him’

Another mechanism employed is rhetorical questions. Several rhetorical questions were put out by the speaker to express his displeasure and confusion following the evangelism of the messengers or the missionaries. As seen in the following:

‘Men are all equal or
Men are unequal?
‘...up in the skies
Watching and not caring?
‘..He the Christ was born
Will all of them be
Damned?’

The speaker seems to have answers to these questions because he acknowledges that his indigenous ways were peaceful and soothing until cacophony set into his house as a result of the influx of Christianity. He laments in the following lines:

“...that little peace I enjoyed

before His messengers arrived
has been disturbed
and I cannot sleep and dream
until it is restored”

Also, the complexities or hypocrisy of Christianity is a major issue discussed in the poem. This suggests that the religion is very complicated with so many contradictions as opposed to the African Traditional Religion. Anyidoho thus presents a succinct criticism of the Judeo-Christian basis for life in modern Africa. For instance, Christianity preaches the love of God and the infinite value of the human soul. Harnack postulated that in reality, they practiced otherwise. The speaker questions why they argue that God is caring and loving yet, he stays up in the heavens watching humans suffer without ‘caring’. Here the poet creates a mental picture that aids the readers to follow the poem with their ‘third eye’. With this visual imagery, the poet paints the picture of God to be an old bearded man who dwells in the skies and is all-knowing. The poet uses this image to argue that He is not a caring God as the messengers preached or revealed. This illustration is evident as the same messengers who preached the gospel were part of the Europeans orchestrating the slave trade or colonization. This also puzzles the speaker to further ask whether ‘men are all equal or Un- unequal’ as the tenets of Christianity preaches. For him, the same missionaries who preached love were directly or indirectly involved in the greatest crime against humanity (the slave trade). It is noted that during the earlier periods of colonization in Africa, Christian missionaries were spreading through the continent along with explorers and merchants.

Also, another complication with Christianity is the fact hell awaits anyone who doesn’t accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Here the poet/persona relies heavily on biblical allusions to present his arguments. The speaker alludes to the famous biblical quote which reads ‘I am the resurrection and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (NIV, John 14.6). The speaker then asks if Jesus really said that they (traditionalists) cannot reach out to God through the lesser gods except only through him (Jesus). If that be the case, the speaker inquires about the fate of his ancestors who were born before Jesus and didn’t know about Him if they would also be condemned to hell. The repetition or reoccurrence of words such as ‘Go’, ‘Go Tell Jesus’, ‘His messengers’, ‘Ask him’, ‘Tell Jesus’, and ‘Tell Him’ in every stanza of the poem is to foreground his message that he demands an answer from Jesus because the message preached by His messengers was unclear as it contradicts the traditional beliefs that have been passed down to him (speaker) from his ancestors.

Still in the confusion about death and salvation, he blames the cacophony on the translucent messages evangelized by the supposed ‘messengers’ which is believed to be the gospel of Jesus. The poet alludes to the parables which is not uncommon in the teachings of Jesus. He complains that the message brought by the messengers also contained parables just like that of Jesus and makes it hard to explain and also open to multiple interpretations.

‘...but gave it to a chosen few
and in parables, they can’t explain...’

The speaker relays that there are so many interpretations since the ‘salvation message’ is coded in parables that the messengers themselves cannot explain. This is to point out some loopholes in the message preached by the evangelists. To settle this confusion, the speaker calls on Jesus to come to deliver the salvation message by himself since the messengers have failed in their interpretation leading to constant confusion. This suggests that the message or what he calls “The Words of Life” is somewhat a tool for destruction of his African beliefs and not what it is purported to be. Here, the poet alludes to Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians in the closing lines of the poem. ‘But have forgotten His Words of Life’. This makes reference to Philippians 2:16 which reads ‘...hold on firmly to the words of life’. This statement by Paul admonishes Christians to hold on to the Gospel or the words of salvation till the judgment day. However, the speaker doesn’t share resonance with this faith and argues that the messengers have forgotten the message that they deem to be salvation. This suggests that the message is incomplete or lacks coherence.

Finally, he alludes to the famous Christian belief that communion is the body and blood of Jesus that bestows peace and cleanses believers from all unrighteousness. The poet challenges the exaggerated belief in Communion as the source of peace. As seen in the lines below:

‘That we may see the truth
That the truth may make us see
That peace is not a piece of bread in wine’

For the poet, peace means having the freedom to worship God through any medium and not being forced to accept

beliefs such as the 'holy communion'.

In Awoonor's *The Cathedral*, the attack on the African identity is heavily explored. The poem's central issue is the disintegration of conventional religion. *The Cathedral* illustrates how African religion and customs are gradually uprooted when Christianity spreads and a cathedral is built in place of traditional totems. Here, we find traces of religious imposition and the colonized forced to accept the identity of the colonizer. This resonates with what Tyson's (2016) position about how the postcolonial theory highlights ideological forces that coerce the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values. The concept of 'Othering' which is seen as the process by which colonial powers constructed colonized peoples as fundamentally different, inferior, and exotic "others," thereby justifying domination and marginalization. Othering creates a binary of self/other, where marginalization. Where the colonizer's culture is positioned as superior and normative, while the colonized are depicted as backward or primitive.

This is evident as the poem captures how indigenous cultural identity is lost and disappears when faced with external influences. The poem commences with a symbolic portrayal of the plot of land as a 'dirty patch.' This metaphor conveys a pessimistic and disregarded condition, representing the decline and deterioration of African tradition. It must be noted that before the construction of the *Cathedral*, the place used to be a 'holy ground' because there was a tree that represents the African tradition. Again, the metaphor 'shedding incense on the infant corn' symbolizes the tree's nurturing impact and profound spiritual meaning to the people (traditionalists). The use of metaphoric title "The Cathedral" speaks volume and symbolizes the new religion that was planted or put up in place the tree, representing the destruction of beloved traditions and the necessity to restore a bond with one's cultural heritage. In the poem, the tree is portrayed as a representation of African religion and custom, giving forth blessings and fostering community. The love for the African culture was personified to characterize the tree as 'shedding incense on the infant corn.' This personification ascribes anthropomorphic characteristics to the tree, highlighting its caring and safeguarding function within society. The poet personifies it to depict its life-saving nature as compared to the cathedral which is noted to be 'doom'. Not only this, the African culture there is exaggerated as the boughs of the tree is depicted as 'stretched across a heaven'. The poet uses hyperbole to magnify the tree's immense size and its association with the divine. Finally, there is also a mental picture created in the poem. The term 'brightened by the last fires of a tribe' conjures the vivid images of a tribal society coming together around a fire, highlighting the cultural and ancestral importance they hold. A clear depiction of visual imagery.

However, with the presence of surveyors and builders (metonymy) - used in this context to describe the missionaries who arrived to promote Christianity as 'surveyors and builders.' This metonymy pertains to the individuals accountable for the devastation of the tree as they overlooked the tree's value and replace it with a cathedral. The erection of the cathedral denotes the coming of missionaries who erased and rejected the African religious customs. The destruction and subversion of pre-existing belief systems were once deeply embedded in the community's collective consciousness.

Another major issue raised in the poem is Strength and Resistance towards foreign imposition. The issue of resistance and power is alluded to but not directly addressed. Outside forces—represented by the surveyors and builders—exercise their dominance over the indigenous population by demolishing local practices. The speaker passionately uses phrases like 'senseless cathedral of doom,' Awoonor expresses his strong resistance to this power and delivers a scathing analysis of its repressive practices. He depicts intense anger and he conveys his fury at the destruction of his identity that has been attacked by the builders and the surveyors as he addressed the plot of land as a where the cathedral is built as a 'dirty patch.' This subject is a tribute to the tenacity and commitment of individuals and groups to preserve their cultural heritage.

Additionally, a scrutiny of the poem's structure revealed that it is composed as a single stanza of nine lines. It appears that structural choice that can be interpreted symbolically. The single stanza may visually evoke the unity and singularity of the cathedral as a monumental structure. Again, the number nine carries culturally layered meanings. While in numerological traditions it can represent divine completeness or spiritual power, in certain cultural contexts including parts of Asia and Africa. The number nine is associated with misfortune or ominous outcomes. The poem's nine-line form may therefore gesture toward the negative implications surrounding the construction of the cathedral, suggesting that what is presented as a sacred national space is instead a source of disruption, burden, or spiritual dislocation for Africans. In this way, the poem's structural economy reinforces the critique embedded in the resentment of the Cathedral. This level of resistance resonates with the postcolonial theory which opines that the imposition of the values of the oppressor on the oppressed promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, and yielded a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself (Tyson, 2016). The speaker seems to offer this resistance to the oppressors' values.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper revealed how the selected poets reacted to attacks on the true African Identity which were orchestrated by the Christian missionaries (messengers, surveyors, and builders). In the poem *Go Tell Jesus*, Anyidoho expresses his primary concern, which is the inadvertent or deliberate misrepresentation of Jesus' message, an action that ultimately triggers a cascade of calamities for the African people. In the same way, in *The Cathedral*, Awoonor reacts vehemently against the 'dying native culture' following the havoc caused by the missionaries and the Europeans. The paper found that these poems address issues such as Christianity as an attack on Traditional beliefs and values, and the hypocritical nature of Christianity. Again, it also discovered that the poets employed some poetic devices such as Metaphor, Apostrophe, Repetition, Allusion, Metonymy, Imagery, Irony, Euphemism, Personification, and Hyperbole to respond to these attacks in more embellished language. Moreover, with the number of lines contained in each poem had a symbolic significance. It was also discovered in *Go Tell Jesus*, the varying lengths of the stanzas projected the inconsistency in the message of the messengers while in "The Cathedral" which is structured as a single nine-line stanza, it is associated with bad luck is evident in the building of the cathedral as the building of bad luck to the African faith as a harbinger of ill fate, contrasting with their reverence for natural elements like trees and ancient shrines. Indeed, from the discussion above, it is noteworthy that the two poets emerge as cultural advocates who reassert the integrity of the African worldview in the face of missionary distortions. Collectively, their works underscore poetry's role as a site of resistance and a means of reclaiming Africa's authentic identity.

5.1 Recommendations

The paper suggests that forthcoming researchers undertake a thorough examination of the utilization of visual imagery in Awoonor and Anyidoho's poetry, aiming to authentically portray African identity. This critical analysis aims not only to illuminate the essence of Africanity but also to contribute substantially to the body of scholarly literature in this domain.

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