

April 6, 1999

Rev. Dr. Timothy Tyler  
Johnson Chapel AME Church  
1306 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
P.O. Box 3715  
Santa Ana, CA 92703

Dear Rev. Dr. Tyler

It is at this time that I must submit my resignation from the African Methodist Episcopal Church ordination process in the Los Angeles-Pasadena District. After thorough reevaluation and reassessment of my call to ministry I cannot in good conscience preach or represent the Christian Gospel as it is currently understood. Indeed God and the Ancestors have called me to ministry at this time in history, but to a ministry of spiritual and cultural reform, renewal and transformation of the African Church Tradition of North America. I love the African Church because I love African people, and I am committed to the physical, spiritual, cultural, and theological liberation of African people both here in the U.S. and abroad. As move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Church must incorporate a Pan African Humanist Vision. We can no longer uncritically adopt the theologies and religious identities of our European captors and enslavers. Even in Europe's history they called for a Renaissance and Reformation of their religious traditions. These movements in European history were centered upon the Latin concept "*Ad Fontes*", Back to the Sources. We too have a similar concept in traditional West African religion and culture entitled Sankofa, "Go Back and Fetch It." We must reclaim the Best of African spiritual culture as resource to create a new theology and ecclesiology, not only for ourselves but the entire world. I wish not to condemn our people's traditional understanding of Christianity. I also wish not to minimize the usefulness of that understanding in the survival of African people in the U.S. When a people are systematically oppressed and denied religious freedom and education they will cling to whatever is most available and use it creatively to survive. As insane as it may be Whiteness has helped our people "survive", "hold on", and "get by". However it will not free our Spirits or liberate us completely from 500 years of enslavement, colonialism, oppression and mental/theological brainwashing. In the wake of African historical truth and ancient wisdom/knowledge being revealed one again, we must redefine our understanding and relationship to Christianity. Not to do so is analagous to wearing clothing that is too small or not our own. We must move into a more truthful, more accurate, more precise, and more fitting reality.

Are we Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, etc. etc., or are We Africans. All of these denominations (except for Roman Catholic which owes its origins to North Africans) began as religious movements in Europe. African and African American Christians have inherited Western Christianity's religious imperialism and exclusivism, and in doing so they have relegated their own ancestral traditions to positions of inferiority. Christianity is growing fastest internationally on the Continent of Africa. Christianity must be repositied and reinvented in the religio-cultural voice of African people. The African Methodist Episcopal Church with its historical influence and international infrastructure can ~~be~~ possibly be the vanguard of a **Sankofa Renewal Movement** throughout the African Diaspora and the World. I must state not taking the lead as an arrogant U.S. led movement, but initiating Diasporic and International dialogue and collaboration.

That Jesus Christ is the only savior of all humanity is the most Eurocentric and White Supremacist doctrine in all of Christendom. This doctrinal tenet was formulated during the institutionalization of Christianity as the sole and official religion of the Roman empire. The doctrine was devised to solidify a schismatic and disparate Roman empire. The doctrine supported the ideology of "One Savior, One Church, One Empire." Will we, an African people continue allow ourselves to be defined by ancient Roman ideology? Early Christianity has a relationship with a culture even more ancient than Rome, Greece or the Hebrews; that is the cultures of the Nile Valley, namely Egypt and Nubia. Christians of African descent must take seriously the relationship between Nile Valley religions and cultures and Christian theology. This is not the proper time to go into detail about this topic. However I will say that the virgin birth, Resurrection, Son of God, Mother of God, eternal life and judgement of souls traditions are most ancient in the Nile Valley. I humbly submit the following 4 points for African Church Renewal:

- 1) Reclamation, Restoration and Reintegration of the Best of Classical, Traditional, and Diasporic African Philosophy, Theology, Spirituality and Ethics. This must be our base for redefining Christian theology.
- 2) Construct and Define a pragmatic Pan African Social and Political Theology.
- 3) Affirm Human Spirituality thereby declaring a Pluralist Theology with regard to the World's Religions.
- 4) Construct a Theology that is consistent and in harmony with Science. Dialogue with contemporary theoretical physicists, cosmologists, chemists and astro-scientists to form a more precise model of the Human in relationship to the Cosmos.

The distinguishing characteristics of a **SANKOFA-AUSARIAN CHRISTIAN**:

- 1) Affirm and substantiate that Christology, that is the Kerygma or Central Proclamation of Christianity and all of its rites and tenets are of Classical African Origin, namely Kush and Kemet. Affirm that our cultural and theological starting point begins with Classical African Civilizations.
- 2) Commit to reformulating, redefining, re-creating, reconceptualizing, and re-presenting Christian theology centered in an African Worldview.
- 3) Appreciate and value the spiritual traditions of all African people. Refrain from using the biased jargon of primitive, paganism, witchcraft, animism, and idolatry when referring to African Religions and other Indigenous Religions. Understand the religio-cultural unity of Popular Traditional African Religion Everywhere (**PTARE**). Refuse to let these traditions be supplanted by Eurocentric Christianity.
- 4) Affirm Jesus Christ (Yashua H' Meshiah) as a Black Judean, a Hebrew of African descent that was consumed by a God-Consciousness that compelled him to spiritually resist Roman imperialists and their Judean collaborators.
- 5) Affirms the Christian message as fundamentally a Liberation Proclamation, both individually and collectively, internally and externally. Reaffirms the ancient Nile Valley tradition and early Christian tradition of the **DIVINIZATION OF THE HUMAN BEING**.
- 6) Commit to a Pan African Theology that is spiritually liberating on all levels of human existence. Commit to a Pan African solidarity that is the foundation for healing and unifying all of the worlds people according to peace and justice.

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Respectfully Submitted in the Spirit of Sankofa and Ausar,

**Brother Salim Faraji**

**Ph.D. Candidate, Claremont Graduate University**

**CC: Presiding Elder Rev. Carolyn Tyler-Guidry**