

MOTHERING AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGIES

MOTHERING AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGIES

Pioneers of the Circle of Concerned
African Women Theologians

Edited by

Mutale M. Kaunda, Musa W. Dube, Linda W. Naicker, Dorcas
J. Chebet, Marthe M. Kondemo & Georgina Boateng

University of South Africa Press
Pretoria



Mothering African Women's Theologies – Edited by Mutale
M. Kaunda, Musa W. Dube, Linda W. Naicker, Dorcas J.
Chebet, Marthe M. Kondemo & Georgina Boateng,

<https://doi.org/10.25159/145>

<https://booksup.co.za/index.php/unisapress/catalog/books/145>
Book | #145 | 385 pages

©The authors 2025



Published by Unisa Press and the NIHSS. This is an Open Access book
distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0
International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

© 2025 The authors.

Published by the University of South Africa &
the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS)
First edition, first impression

Print book: ISBN: 978-1-77615-211-7

E-book: ISBN: 978-1-77615-212-4

Prior to acceptance for publication by Unisa Press, this work was subjected to a double-blind peer review process mediated through the Senate Publications Committee of the University of South Africa.

Published by Unisa Press in association with the NIHSS
University of South Africa
P O Box 392, 0003 UNISA

Project Editor: Jack Chokwe
Copyeditor: Llewellyn Jegels
Cover Design: Lubabalo Qabaka
Layout and Typesetting: Bheki Gumede
Indexing: Philangani Sibiya
Printer:



Mothering African Women's Theologies – Edited by Mutale
M. Kaunda, Musa W. Dube, Linda W. Naicker, Dorcas J.
Chebet, Marthe M. Kondemo & Georgina Boateng,

<https://doi.org/10.25159/145>

<https://booksup.co.za/index.php/unisapress/catalog/books/145>

©The authors 2025

Book | #145 | 385 pages



Published by Unisa Press and the NIHSS. This is an Open Access book distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

CONTENTS

Preface	xii
1 Giving Birth to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians <i>Mutale M. Kaunda, Musa W. Dube and Linda Naicker</i>	1
2 Mercy Amba Oduyoye: Our Journey with the Founder of the Circle <i>Gertrude Aopesyaga Kapuma</i>	8
PART I: EAST AFRICAN FOUNDING MATRIARCHS	14
3 Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro: Unto us a Legend is Born! <i>Musa W. Dube</i>	15
4 Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike: Scholar-Advocate Mama Africa in Christ <i>Yoknyam Dabale</i>	20
5 Nyambura a Heroine in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA): Ministry in A Patriarchal Context <i>Jane Kariuki</i>	26
6 Professor Teresia Hinga: The Matriarch of Our Time <i>Magdaline Chepkirui Koech</i>	31
7 The Golden Age of Matriarchy and Sheroism in the Life of Anna Elisha Mghwira: An Afro-Feminist Approach to Judges 4 <i>Dorcas Chebet Juma</i>	37
8 Teaching and Living Her-Story: Emily Awino Onyango's Journey of Trailblazing <i>Lydia Chemei</i>	44
9 Rev. Mabel Katahweire: Our Ancestor and a Women's Health Rights Advocate <i>Grace Wangechi Ngotho</i>	49
10 Whispers and Transformation: A Theology of Presence in the Ministry of Pastor Anna Makyao <i>Faith K. Lugazia</i>	53
11 Betty J. Ekeya: A Founding Mother of the Circle <i>Ellen Chimowa</i>	59

12	The Influence and Legacy of Rev. Joyce Nki on Subsequent Generations of Female Church Leaders in the Methodist Church of Kenya <i>Diane Kawira Mugambi</i>	64
PART II: POEMS		70
13	Encountering the Voice of Professor Anne Kubai: The Circle Matriarch on the Art of Academic Writing <i>Dorcas Chebet Juma</i>	71
14	Rev. Canon Mary Auma Owuor Jalango: A True Measuring Rod and A Matriarch <i>Wayua Kiilu</i>	76
15	Overcoming Cultural Barriers: A Tribute to Alina Maente Machem <i>Merrishia Singh-Naicker</i>	82
16	Martha Mukangara/Mukansara: Hidden but not Forgotten A Creative Piece <i>Yvonne Winfildah Takawira-Matwaya</i>	88
17	Esme Akosua Siriboe: Woman/Girl-Child Empowerment Advocate <i>Sylvia Owusu-Ansah</i>	90
18	Blessed is Titilayo Mary Fibiye: Tracing your Footsteps Through the valley of Death (Poem) <i>Musa W. Dube</i>	94
19	Helena Obu and Her Contribution to the Circle (Poem) <i>Benedicta Opoku Mensah</i>	96
20	Victoria Brew Riverson: A Circle Pioneer (a Poem) <i>Etoile L. Ayorkor Ajavon-Djanie</i>	97
21	For such a time as this – A prayer poem in honour of Angelica Latse <i>Georgina Kwanima Boateng</i>	98
22	Closing the Divide: Tale of a Samaritan Woman Meg Umeagudosu Eko <i>Florence Egbeyale</i>	100
23	A Prayer Poem in Honour of Ebele Eko Hear the Prayer of this Woman, Oh Lord <i>Ruth Oluwakemi Oke</i>	102

24	Pikini Mawika: An Untold Story (Poem) <i>Véronique Kavuo Kahindo</i>	104
25	Sœur Tundu-Kyalu Gertrude: Pillar of tradition (poem) <i>MBITA Martine Paule épouse Monesse</i>	106
26	Justine Mbwiti Kahungu: Forever the African Matriarch (Poem) <i>Nzitoussou Yon Hélène Pélagie</i>	107
PART III: SOUTHERN AFRICA FOUNDING MEMBERS		108
27	Eva Chipenda: The Precious Charm and the Wondering Matriarch of Calomboloca <i>Rebecca Bartocho</i>	109
28	‘Mosadi o mokokotlo o sephara’: A reflection on the life and work of Brigalia Bam <i>Mantima Thekiso</i>	114
29	The Journey of Isabel Apawo Phiri with Special Focus on her Contribution to Affirming Gender Justice through Curriculum and Pedagogy <i>Linda Naicker</i>	120
30	Omega Bula’s African Women’s Economic Ecumenical Engagement in the Circle <i>Mutale Mulenga Kaunda</i>	129
31	Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde: Our Zambian Shero and Matriarch <i>Bridget Masaiti Mukuka</i>	135
32	From Contextualisation to Critical Appropriation: A Narrative of a Hermeneutical Journey of a Founding Member of the Circle of African Women Theologians <i>Sonene Nwayo and Joyce Tsabedze</i>	143
33	Aletta Mandoro: Stalwart of the Christian Faith, Dedicated Teacher and Women’s Advocate <i>Linda Naicker and Kedsaletsu Hlwati</i>	148
34	Mothering African Women’s Theologies: The Story of Angelene Swart <i>Nobesuthu Tom</i>	153

35	A Heavenly gender injustice protest from Rev. Chipo Mthombeni to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) <i>Snenhlanhla Chisale and Elitha Moyo</i>	158
36	Christine Manda: Marginal Women and the church in Malawi <i>Dorothy Tembo</i>	167
37	Reverend Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo: The Mighty Matriarch in the United Church of Zambia <i>Helen Mwenya Chisanga</i>	173
38	Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba: A Trailblazing Beacon of Hope <i>Seipati L. Ngcobo</i>	182
PART IV:	WEST AFRICAN FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS	187
39	Sr Rosemary N. Edet: A Legacy for a New Role and New Challenges for African Women <i>Estelle Sogbou</i>	188
40	Prof. Elizabeth Amoah: A Beloved Grandmother in the Academia <i>Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh</i>	194
41	Theresa A.D. Acolaste: The Passionate Believer <i>Grace Anning</i>	198
42	The Story of Professor Esther Acolaste: A Circle Pioneer <i>Dorothy BEA (Abutiate) Akoto</i>	202
43	Honorable Rev. Paulina A. Kummadey-Senanu: The Life and Work of a Pioneer Woman <i>Etoile L. Ayorkor Ajavon-Djanie</i>	208
44	Rev. Mrs Anna Quansah: Multi-talented Industrious Woman of Faith <i>Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh</i>	214
45	Margaret Lilian Naa Tsawe Quist: A Voice With the Overlooked <i>Leticia Oduro Asante</i>	219
46	Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo (nee Aye): A Life of Sacrifice <i>Stella Gyamfi</i>	222

47	Documenting the Life and Times of Professor Daisy Nwachukwu <i>Osamamen Oba Eduviere</i>	226
48	Regina Ogbozo: Creative Piece <i>Carnie Amo-Nyampong</i>	231
49	Rev. Rachel Etrue Tetteh and Women in the African Church <i>Tabe Jennet Otob Epse Benoni-Wang</i>	234
50	Rev. (Rtd) Ada Ofori-Owusu: The Selfless Pacesetter <i>Georgina Kwanima Boateng</i>	240
51	The Story of Reverend Mabel Selma Anku Morny <i>Rachel Pauline Aikins</i>	246
52	The Contribution of Dr Rabiatsu Deinyo Ammah: Multi-Faith Approach to Gender Discourse <i>Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh</i>	252
53	Araba Ata Sama: A Loveable Christian <i>Grace Anning</i>	257
54	‘Chief Superintendent of Work’: Remembering the Life and Work of Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo <i>Grace Adasi</i>	261
55	The Pioneering Journey of Rebecca Ganusah: A Trailblazing Matriarch of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians <i>Jackline Makena Mutuma</i>	266
56	Ordination of Women in Methodist church: The Journey of Reverend Rhoda Ada-James <i>Opeyemi Wemimo Adedoyin</i>	271
57	A Biographical Story of Rev. Dinah Abbey-Mensah <i>Joyce Boham</i>	276
58	The Story and Life of Josephine Olubunmi Olagunju, SHCJ <i>Yetunde Ruth Balogun</i>	282
59	Sophia Akua Adutwumwaa Duke: Celebrating a Pioneering Woman <i>Margaret Reid Bartel</i>	286

60	Sankofa and African Women Theologies: The Story of Llyoda Fanusie <i>Marceline L. Yele</i>	289
61	A Forgotten Matriarch? Patience Dickson (Poem) <i>Lawrencia Manu-Boampong</i>	295
62	Biography of Rev. Margaret Buechner Asiamah. Ampadu- Daaduum(Rtd) (Nee Margaret Buechner Appianimaa Boama-Secu) <i>Joyce Boham</i>	296
63	Rose Zoé Obianga, A Life, A Writing <i>Gertrude Tokam and Fidèle Fifamè Houssou</i>	301
PART V: AFRICAN DIASPORIC FOUNDING MEMBERS		310
64	Reverend Professor Katie Geneva Cannon: A Founding Member of the Circle <i>Yvonne Winfildah Takawira-Matwaya</i>	311
65	Dr Jacquelyn Grant: A Mother of Womanist Theology <i>Ericka Shawndricka Dunbar</i>	316
66	The Transformational Life and Ecumenical Theologies of Rev. Verna Cassells <i>Nicole Ashwood</i>	323
PART VI: CENTRAL AFRICAN FOUNDING MOTHERS OF THE CIRCLE		331
67	Sister Bernadette Mbuy-Beya: A Woman of Faith <i>Marthe Maleke Kondemo</i>	332
68	Reverend Berthe Nzeba Mwena Kalen: A Living Legend <i>Marthe Maleke Kondemo</i>	337
69	Jeannette Munda Badibanga: A Wise Woman Modeled After Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:32–35 <i>Kavira Nganza</i>	340
70	Joséphine Farhi Chibaonza: Pioneer full of personal initiative <i>Charlotte Umba Yaula</i>	343
71	Agnès Meta-Kapitene: A Pioneering and Social Transformation Advocate-creative Piece <i>Véronique Kavuo Kahindo</i>	346

72	Pioneering and Mothering African Women Theologians: The Journey Continues	
	<i>Mutale Mulenga Kaunda</i>	350
	Index	354

PREFACE

CULTIVATING UNITY AND THE SPIRIT OF GENDER JUSTICE: 'ONE TREE DOES NOT MAKE A FOREST'

Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Yamoah Oduyoye

Before delving into the narratives of our pioneer members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, it is imperative to highlight that the Circle is rooted within the ethos of unity within diversity and the belief that collective action is imperative for progress. Our cultural upbringing, epitomised by the adage 'One tree does not a forest make' and encapsulated in the Akan proverb 'Dua kor gye mframa a ebu,' instilled in us the value of solidarity and communal resilience. With this as my worldview, in 1969, I became the first African woman to attain an Intermediate Bachelor of Divinity from University of London. This was followed by a BA in the Study of Religions from the University of Ghana, Legon, in 1963. My academic journey culminated in earning a Tripos Part III in Dogmatics from Cambridge University. As time passed, my journey was adorned with recognition in the form of honorary degrees and professorships.

This foray into the Christian theological landscape catalysed through the ecumenical movement, sparked numerous invitations to contribute through writing, speaking engagements and academic appointments. Prior to achieving these academic successes and accolades and throughout my journey, there was an increasing awareness that the realm of theology necessitated broader representation from African women. Thus, the pivotal gathering at Trinity College in 1989 heralded the birth of the Circle. Anchored in the Yoruba adage 'a bird with one wing does not fly' and echoing the Aramaic dictum of Jesus of Nazareth, 'Talitha Qumi,' as aptly interpreted by Modupe Oduyoye, the Circle became a beacon for promoting the empowerment and full humanity of women, transcending gender boundaries to encompass all marginalised individuals.

With the guiding hand of Rosemary Edet and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro, the latter, a co-editor of *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, we embarked on this collective journey wielding tenets that underpinned our ethos daily. Edet's creation of the emblem for the Circle, the Rising Woman,

symbolised our shared commitment to upliftment of women and all subjugated and marginalised peoples. The proverbial wisdom ‘*Wotwa sa a na biara anni wakyi a wofre wo abodando*’ resonated as testament to the importance of collective endeavour, acknowledging the contributions of all those who have walked this path alongside us.

This work is a tribute to the tireless efforts of countless women globally who rallied behind the cause, from the strategic planning at the World Council of Churches General Secretariat to the grassroots fundraising that made the 1989 gathering possible. Their collective spirit and unwavering support have shaped the ongoing journey of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, inspiring countless uplifting stories like Eva Chipenda’s ‘The Visitor’ in which she wrote, ‘If Mercy can write, so can I,’ which underscores the transformative power of mentorship and solidarity.

As we continue this journey, guided by the timeless words of Jesus, “Talitha Qumi,” may our collective endeavours remain steadfast in addressing the myriads of challenges faced by women in religion and culture, ensuring that all voices are heard and all stories are honoured.

Bibliography

- Chipenda, E.C. *The Visitor: An African Woman’s Story of Travel and Discovery*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996.
- Oduyoye, M. and Kanyoro, M. *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. New York, Orbis Books, 1992.

Chapter 1

GIVING BIRTH TO THE CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs

Mutale M. Kaunda, Musa W. Dube and Linda Naicker

Introduction

As the 2024 Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' Sankofa Conference approached, it was imperative to acknowledge and honour every woman who participated in the physical gathering of the Circle convocation in Legon, Ghana, in 1989. Their presence and contributions laid the foundation for numerous African women to aspire to greater achievements within religious spheres. This includes not only those who became well-known and influential figures following the 1989 Circle convocation but also those who were instrumental in the planning and execution of the Circle, regardless of their subsequent prominence. It is recognised that not all matriarchs who attended the 1989 Circle Convocation went on to achieve renown and influence in the same manner. Some may have faded from public view with limited available information about their endeavours. However, this volume aims to provide recognition and documentation for each and every participant, ensuring that their contributions are remembered and celebrated.

The first gathering saw 70 highly-pregnant African women descend upon the delivery space of Legon, Ghana from Saturday, 23 September to Sunday, 1 October 1989. Oredein (2023) states that

The Circle's inaugural meeting in Accra, Ghana, in 1989 was attended by 80 women scholars from all over the African continent and 200 churchwomen from Ghana. They met under the theme and heading 'Daughter of Africa, Arise!' The biblical mandate 'Talitha Cum!' (Mark 5:41) captures the Circle's origin, purpose and necessity: To affirm that girls and women are not dead in their communities but very much living beings in Christ.

This volume, however, has focused on the 70 women that were documented because those are the names that could be accessed as they were documented. There has been no list for the 280 names that were at the convocation, except the 70 that are written about in this volume. We, however, appreciate the presence of

every woman that was at the Circle inauguration in 1989 even though we could not find all their names despite all our efforts and research.

These women entered into labour and departed with a beautiful baby girl, whose name is the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth, the Circle). In 2024, this baby girl is a grown woman of 35 years. In this volume, we present an African feminist theological historiography of appreciation that seeks to tell the stories and appreciate the 70 women who became pregnant with hope—the hope that gave birth to an academic space for African women who study religion, gender and culture as it intersects with every developmental trajectory of black women. Their quest to birth a worthy space for African women in Church, academia and within faith-based institutions was stimulated by their encounter with absence.

This was the absence of African women in academic institutions and faith-based leadership positions. Although women are in the majority in most religions and cultures, religion is often used to legitimise women's oppression and marginalisation. By entering the delivery room, African women wanted to give birth and to mother a different reality, practice and relationship. They wanted to give birth to and nurture a different world. When the very first book of the Circle was published, that is, *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church*, at its launch, its editors' eloquently spoke of their quest:

African women theologians have come to realise that as long as men and other foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they are dead (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992, 1).

The idea of mothering in this volume is therefore understood in a metaphorical sense as the Circle's capacity give, nurture and to affirm life in a context where patriarchal forms of religion, culture and related institutions marginalise African women. This way of thinking about mothering is in keeping with African wisdom and traditions of 'it takes a village to raise a child.' This principle is grounded in the pro-existence of mothering—the primordial capacity to nurture, care and heal others as an inherent responsibility of all human beings. In the African worldview, mothering pre-exists as a relational principle that constitutes care, nurture, giving life and affirming life.

According to Oduyoye, "Mothering, biological or otherwise, calls for a life of letting go, a readiness to share resources and to receive with appreciation what others offer for the good of the community (2004, 58)".

Oduyoye clarifies that African women who choose to mother in the most difficult contexts and circumstances, do so because they carry and model the ethic of caring for the other—the quest to see the other become a whole person:

In the face of exploitative and anti-communal capitalist and neo-liberal economies, which expose women, (children and communities as a whole) to poverty and compel us to think that mothering is a source of poverty (2004, 62).

Oduyoye maintains that “What we need to turn our attention to, therefore, is the poverty of the human spirit that ignores the humanity of women as persons made in God’s image and mothers as co-creators with God and imitators of God’s management of creation (2004, 62)”.

Mothering thus offers a prophetic ethic. It is an invitation to a worldview that models care for and empowerment of the other as a matter of utmost importance to our being in God’s world and being with each other. We are aware that the word ‘empowerment’ in the discourses on women and subjugated people is a contested term (Nazneen *et al.* 2014). We use the word to indicate increase of spiritual, political, social, economic and cultural strength. Mothering is the God ethic. The formation of the Circle as an act of mothering is highlighted by all the chapters in this volume and testifies to African women’s quest for mothering (Penxa Matholeni *et al.*, 2020; Chirongoma *et al.*, 2021; Chisale *et al.* 2021; Berman *et al.* 2021; Daniel *et al.* 2021; Dube *et al.* 2021; Chirongoma 2022).

Mothering is a verb. It is what a caring community does. It is the action and the condition of being human together as a community. The Bemba of Zambia have a proverb that says, *mayo mpapa, naine nkakupapa* [I am mothered because we mother together (the literal translation would be ‘mother carry me, I will also carry you at a later stage’)]. Mothering is mutual care that surpasses familial relationships and one’s context. Mothering is radical care that is rooted in the unconditional love and co-nurturing of life beyond the community of one’s immediate experience. The Circle began in 1989 as a critical space of co-mothering African women scholars. The first generation of scholars’ initial duty was to co-mother themselves and acquire necessarily experience to embark on mothering the next generation. Hence, the Circle positioned its scholarship in the framework of doing communal theology (Kanyoro 2012).

The Circle was first and foremost a hermeneutical community of women with a critical concern for the liberation of African religious women. It functioned as a community or a liminal point for thorough co-mothering at two important levels: first, co-mothering critical knowledge necessary for liberation and emancipation of African women and promotion of social transformation and second, communities of equality and justice for all. The Circle argued that sexism is a sin in both church and society. The Circle’s theology challenged the inculturationⁱ theological project that was exclusively based on male experiences as dehumanising; women’s experiences were left out. Second, the Circle has invested in radical mothering of young women’s minds and developing them into the next generation of scholars. The battle for emancipation of the young African women from the shackles of religious patriarchy can only be adequately waged by liberated mothers.

The Circle provides platforms for mentoring young women and promoting their scholarship. However, the Circle realised that women alone cannot liberate all the women in Africa. Therefore, the Circle has also invested in mothering male allies to help construct redemptive theologies of masculinities (e.g., Ezra Chitando, Tinyiko Maluleke, Julius Gathogo, Kennedy Owino etc.). This reflects the ritual theoretical

world of many African societies in which young women are nurtured into adults by mothers, paternal aunts, grandmothers and community mentors. For example, in *imbusa* among the Bemba of Zambia, *chinamwali* and *chilangizo* of the Chewa in Malawi, *Ssenga* of Baganda in Uganda, naming rites of Babukusu of Kenya, mothering rites and traditions are mothering in nature as the older women equips the younger women in time-honoured traditions. In coming together as a Circle, the shaping and rewriting/re-righting the discourse of theology, spiritual, cultural and religious experiences of women in Africa were set in motion. Almost similar to ways in which mothers decisively and intentionally begin to train the younger generations to take up the mantle and build on it. Oduyoye asserts that “Nurturing the next generation is a communal duty and all the women of the community become one’s mothers (1995, 26)”.

Mothering is the action taken to nurture by mentoring young theologians to provide leadership and to assist with equipping the coming generations by a predecessor, championing for their agency, liberation and emancipation, which is life giving, not life denying. Mothering in essence is caring enough to pave a way for those who are arising to have a less uncomfortable experience.

Over the years, some of the founding mothers of the Circle have been conferring scholarly, spiritual, social, economic and cultural wisdom on the younger generation in various ways and spaces and calling them to, *Thalita Cumi!* that is, to arise. The rising stars of the Circle are now honouring the matriarchs who founded the Circle and mothered them through the trenches of the dearth of information about African women by African women and for African women. One of the tenets of the Circle is to mentor one another, especially young and emerging theologians. The pioneers of the Circle ignited a fire and called all African women to sit around that fire and begin to tell their stories and rewrite/re-right their herstories. Mothering one another to reach for the stars and to continue to engage in global spaces where African women’s voices should and must be heard.

The journey of observing the Circle take its first steps into the global spectrum and deal with teething, falling, rising and finally standing strong on her own two feet and being recognised in global spaces that would not otherwise have acknowledged her, has been significant. Women from all over Africa went to participate in the first step of African women of faith reflecting on their own stories, making a statement that African women will write/right African women’s herstories and experiences. Aunt Mercy, as she is fondly referred to in the Circle, internalised the notion that African women needed a seat at the global table of decision making and brought women together to brainstorm the way forward and so, the Circle was born. Gathogo (2010, 2) writes about Oduyoye as a mother of African women’s theologies. He explains that her “leadership is about foot-washing, enabling the tired and dejected to feel refreshed again so that they can pick themselves up and contribute to develop a caring, compassionate and a just community”.

The Circle was birthed through the realisation that African women were excluded from certain spaces of decision-making even when those decisions were

clearly about them. The desire to pass along this yearning to other African women with a like-minded passion to overcome the atrocities they endured is testament to the strength and tenacity of African women. Oduyoye (2002, xi) asserts that “The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has taken the veil off the faces of women we all know were present even when the history books and the stories excluded them”.

Women of the Circle reflect together on faith and social concerns that constantly push them to the periphery of not only religion and culture, but also economies, politics, health and a host of other intersectional social injustices and inconsistencies.

Another key area of concern for the Circle is the politics of naming. Naming women is the process of resisting marginalisation and exclusion, as argued by (Phiri and Nadar 2006). The Circle acknowledges and maintains that names have immense personal, political, cultural, filial and historic significance and connection. It speaks to our identity, affords us a sense of belonging and community and further signifies our place in the world. This volume names the women of the Circle and shares the work that they have engaged in prior to and post 1989. A prayer, a song, a poem, or a creative piece is offered for those women whose life histories could not be traced because they do not have an internet footprint and/or we were not able to locate any existing family members or people who knew them well to conduct interviews with. What is of utmost importance is that all 70 inaugural members of the Circle are named and a short biography is written about each of them. The authors in this volume followed a format that includes naming the women they were writing about, their educational training, participation in the Circle and theological views.

The authors used their creativity in presenting these important life journeys of the pioneering Circle women. While we are yet to achieve gender equality, we commit to remembering, we commit to the struggle for complete emancipation, we acknowledge, appreciate and honour those who went before us and paved the way for a vastly better future for black women everywhere. The stories of the Circle innovators are written to enable reflection upon the rich history and life stories of the pioneer members of Circle. We are grateful to those who walked a path before us and removed many barriers and obstacles so that rising stars or younger generations of the Circle can walk a bit easier. It is important to honour those on whose shoulders the Circle has stood and acknowledge the monumental role the founding members of the Circle have played in shaping the theology of African women. The legacy the Circle pioneers left us and the huge responsibility that now rests on the shoulders of those who come after them are paving the way for the Circle’s new members, or rising stars, as they are referred to, to take seriously the crucial work of the Circle to safeguard and advocate for a better future for African women’s scholarship and leadership. This biographical volume serves as a tribute to the women who laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Circle. It emphasises the importance of women acknowledging and honouring those who have paved the way for their presence in global spaces.

While recognising that these women, like all individuals, may have had flaws, the volume focuses on their significant contributions and involvement in both local and global arenas. Through naming, highlighting and celebrating the women who participated in the convocation, this volume aims to underscore the pioneering efforts of these individuals. It is crucial to note that this recognition does not imply perfection on the part of these women but rather acknowledges and celebrates their instrumental role in initiating a Circle that has inspired countless African religious women to excel in their respective fields. Phiri and Nadar aptly titles an article “*What’s in a Name? Forging a Theoretical Framework for African Women’s Theologies.*” This volume identifies and honours the pioneers, acknowledging their significant contributions and commemorating their presence at the inauguration event. While some readers may interpret the chapters as portraying a community of women admiring these pioneering figures, the overarching intention is to recognise and celebrate the achievements and impact of these remarkable individuals. The majority of women who convened in Ghana for the inaugural Circle meeting were not yet theological educators. As highlighted in the subsequent chapters, many African religious women pursued further education following the inauguration of the Circle. While attendees at the meeting predominantly possessed diplomas or undergraduate degrees, a select few had attained higher education and held positions as lecturers in seminaries, Bible schools and universities. The establishment of the Circle served as a foundational milestone, propelling numerous women into spaces that elevated their prominence and facilitated their advancement within theological education and related spheres.

Notes

- i The term “inculturation,” in a theological sense, signifies the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in a manner conversant with a culture. It results in the creative reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either. See, Inculturation Theology, *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/inculturation-theology>.

Bibliography

- Berman, S.K., Leshota, P.L., Dunbar, E.S., Dube, M.W. and Kgalemang, M. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Biblical Studies: Interpretations in the Context of Climate Change*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.
- Chisale, S. and Bosch, R.R. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Theology*, HTS Religion & Society Series Volume 10. AOSIS, Cape Town, 2021.
- Chirongoma, S. and Kiilu, V.S.W. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa: World Religions and Environmental Imagination*. Stellenbosch: African SUN Media, 2022.
- Chirongoma, S. and Mombo, E. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Postcolonial and Liberation Theologies*, (eds.). Lexington Book: New York, 2021.
- Daniel, S., Kebaneilwe, M.D. and Savala, A. *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Mission*. Stellenbosch: African SUN Media, 2021.

- Dube M.W. et al. "Mother Economies: Botho//Ubuntu and Community Building in the Urban Space, A Focus on Naomi//Laban, Bridal and Baby Shower," in Siwila Lilian (ed.). *Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, (2021): 61–122.
- Gathogo, J. Mercy Amba Oduyoye as the mother of African Women's Theologies. *Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 34 no. 1, (2010).
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. "Threading Beads in the Story of the Circle," pp.1942. in Phiri, I.A. & S. Nadar, (eds.). *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2012.
- Sohela, N., Darkwah, A. and Sultan, M. Researching women's empowerment: Reflections on methodology by southern feminists, *Women's Studies International Forum* 45, (2014): 55–62.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa*, Maryknoll: New York, 1995.
- Oduyoye, M. A. "Preface: Naming Our Mothers," in *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa* edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri, Devankarsham Betty Govinden and Sarojini Nadar, Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, 2002.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Poverty and Motherhood," in *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. New York: Orbis Press, 2004.
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M. *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. New York, Orbis Books, 1992.
- Oredein, O. "Mercy Amba Oduyoye and her Circle" in *The Christian Century: Thoughtful, Independent, Progressive*, 2023, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/features/mercy-amba-oduyoye-and-her-circle> [Accessed on April 13, 2024]
- Penxa, M.N., Boateng, G.K. and Manyonganise, M. *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and African Indigenous Religions*, eds. Stellenbosch: SUN Media, 2020.
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. (eds.). *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Orbis Books, (2006): 280.

Chapter 2

MERCY AMBA ODUYOYE: OUR JOURNEY WITH THE FOUNDER OF THE CIRCLE

Gertrude Aopesyaga Kapuma

Introduction

Discussing the Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth the Circle) always invokes the name of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, affectionately known as Auntie Mercy by the younger Circle generation. Mercy Oduyoye has contributed immensely to the African theologies whose aim is to embolden both women and men and their communities. She aims to table issues that can bring empowerment to women, that is, to advocate for mindset change in our societies.

Who is Mercy Oduyoye?

Mercy Amba Oduyoye is an African female theologian from Ghana. She was born on 21 October 1934, the oldest of nine siblings. Her father was a Methodist minister, Rev. Charles Yamoah and her mother, Mercy Yaa Dakwaa Yamoah was advocating for women and girls within the church. Oduyoye obtained both her first degree and postgraduate degree between 1959 and 1969 in Ghana and England, respectively; her postgraduate degree was completed at Cambridge University in 1969. Gathogo (2010, 1) highlights that, “Between 1965 and 1969, Mercy Oduyoye was studying at the University of Cambridge, UK. Here, she got her B.A. (Hons) Theology: Tripos Part III, Dogmatics (1965) and M.A. (Hons) Theology (1969)”.

She got married to Adedoyin Modupe Oduyoye, a Nigerian Anglican Christian, in 1968 (Gathogo 2010, 1). Her educational background was instrumental in her reaching prominent positions in Africa and beyond. She was able to achieve great things and strived to bring along many African daughters with her. Oredein demonstrates that Oduyoye served in various founding groups including the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, and the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana.

African Women Theologies

Oduyoye championed the launch of the Circle and is considered the mother of this baby. She wanted to make sure that African women had a space for undertaking theology and that their voices are heard through research, writing, publications and leadership both in the academy and faith-based organisations. With the inauguration of the Circle, Oduyoye made a great contribution to African Christianity and African women's theologies. The focus continues to be on engaging issues that affect African women, that is, the oppressive elements and abuse in the name of culture and religion such as patriarchal colonisation, capitalism, pandemics and environmental oppression that women experience in their day-to-day lives. It is critical for the Circle to emphasise African women's transformation and liberation using African cultural frameworks and approaches that are life-giving. These approaches and frameworks allow women to own their stories and experiences. Through storytelling, women can map their journeys freely and are able to narrate their stories of oppression as well as imagine their liberation. Mercy Oduyoye explains that, "African women accept story as a source of theology and so they tell their own stories as well as study the experiences of other women including those outside their own continent, but especially those in Africa whose stories remain unwritten...This framework is necessary, given the fact that narrative theology prevails in both oral and written materials. The normative role of stories in Africa's oral corpus and the role of story in biblical theology, give women the paradigm for their theological reflection (2001, 10–11)".

Storytelling is a critical approach to African women's research and whether it is referred to as "storytelling, autoethnography, or narrative theological method, this is a relevant, adequate and critical methodology for African women's way of theologising" as Kaunda (2018, 322) asserts.

African women take back their power, identity and responsibility by telling and owning their stories and experiences. The choice of African women theologies is to distinguish it from other theologies. Musa Dube further states that, "The phrase 'women's theology' is mostly used by the Two-Thirds World women to distinguish their work from that of 'First World' or 'Western' Women. Feminism is sometimes associated with Western Women. This has led some men in Two-Thirds World contexts to associate it with discourse concerning women's call for liberation and their quest for empowerment (2001, 10)".

Oduyoye further argues that, "it therefore does not stop at theory but moves to commitment, advocacy and transforming praxis" (2001, 16).

Oduyoye's vision from inception has been to bring African women's voices into the global spectrum and for African women to embrace a safe space where their voices are heard and included in decision-making spaces. For Oduyoye, this means that women themselves are key and should take part in all the stages of change in order to reach liberation and transformation as African women. This theology has positively impacted and transformed many young African theologians (women

and men) who are able to appreciate the work and commitment that Oduyoye and the pioneering Circle women have trailblazed.

Her writings

Oduyoyes' publications are recognised in various religious institutions of learning in Africa and beyond. Her writing provokes the reader to think differently and rethink various long-held beliefs, to question the normatives and redefine what it means to be an African and a woman. In her book, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, she discusses all aspects of what it means to be human and a woman in Africa, which affirms human life. In Oduyoye's own words, the book "undertakes dialogue between cultures as well as within cultures. With a developing cultural hermeneutic this [African women's] theology boldly criticises what is oppressive while advocating for the enhancement of what is liberative not only for women but for the whole community" (2001, 17).

Oduyoye's passion for the recognition of African women in global spaces which includes her own writing, impacts the reader to look at African culture and leverage life-giving aspects while rejecting those aspects of culture and religion that are life-denying (Phiri and Nadar 2006, 11). Her writing is not only empowering but also leaves behind a legacy of the culture of writing and the need for African women to write/right their own herstories and produce knowledge.

Culture

Oduyoye has a passion for African culture—she does not only praise the culture but she also critiques life-denying aspects of African culture that are oppressive and life-denying. In her writing, Oduyoye (2001, 12) emphasises that African women's theologians understand that within African culture there are aspects that are liberating and also aspects of culture that are oppressive. Therefore, African culture is approached with caution or suspicion in order to identify the positive aspects and promote them for social transformation. Identifying positive aspects of culture and leveraging them for transformation while denying negative and oppressive aspects of African culture is considered "the locus of resistance" (Oduyoye 2001, 12).

This also emboldens African women to "critique their culture from within and avoid impositions from without" Kaunda (2013, 8).

Oduyoye (2001, 70) explains that what is described as feminine or masculine, is culturally encoded or constructed and should not be allowed to have a final word on women's identity. African women have always been custodians of culture and, in matrilineal communities, they also held religious roles as priests. Unfortunately, some oppressive aspects of African culture are intertwined with some oppressive aspects of religion and are often used in the church to determine the participation or non-participation of women. As Oduyoye notes:

A majority of worshippers in the churches of Africa are women. A deeper grounding in theology and a better understanding of scripture will affect the way they worship. As women themselves discover and remove the obstacles in their way, they will create new and joyful patterns of true worship of the God of Truth' (1992, 5).

Ecumenical experience

As an African woman who was in global spaces of religious, theological and ecumenical engagements, Oduyoye has played a critical role in introducing African women to the ecumenical space. Oduyoye was a youth education secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1967–1979 and worked as youth secretary for All Africa Conference of Churches from 1970–1973, both of which are ecumenical organisations. She was the first African woman to hold the position of Deputy General Secretary in World Council of Churches between 1987 and 1994 (Gathogo 2010, 3). She was also the first female president of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians EATWOT from 1997–2001. While she was the deputy general secretary of WCC, her desire to have more African women in such spaces grew and, consequently, she had meetings with various women to prepare for the Circle's birth. Rachel Nyagondwe-Fiedler confirms that:

The other drive that led Mercy Amba Oduyoye to start the Circle was that she was aware that she was 'one lone' woman in the theological field and found herself among men! She decided to have a community of women in theology, and this was the embryonic stage of the Circle. The Circle in its embryonic vision was already aimed at transforming gender inequalities' (2017, 25–26).

After the UN Decade for Women, i.e. 1975–1985, in which Oduyoye participated, she felt much need to do the same for women in church and religious spaces who were being left behind and denied access in leadership and decision making based on being female. As one of the delegates observed:

The churches had not been sufficiently aware of the Decade (UN) and in many churches, the position of women has not improved in the last ten years. During the discussion that followed, our Methodist bishop declared: "What we need is a churches-decade for women." (Oduyoye 1990, 1).

An Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in solidarity with women was launched (1988–1998) under the theme, "who will roll the stone away?"

Oduyoye (1990, 13) noted that certain teachings and Christian practices hinders women's full participation in theological, spiritual and even decision-making influence in churches and in their communities. These hindrances then pave the way for unequal relationships between women and men in churches and communities.

Since the Circle's birth, many African women from various African regions have furthered their education, had their studies funded and were encouraged to research, write and publish. African women through the Circle have been emboldened to

take up leadership positions in church and in academic spaces within Africa and beyond. Oduyoye's keynote address at the AACC Assembly of 1997 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, stirred the participants at the assembly who had gathered under the theme "Troubled but not destroyed."

She stressed in her keynote that "Africa is troubled in many ways, but we are not destroyed. The reason being that we are lying on a solid foundation which is Jesus Christ."

Oduyoye continues to inspire change and impart her knowledge to everyone who is willing to receive that knowledge. From inception, it was clear that the work of the Circle would focus on mentorship of younger women and those women who would tap into the importance of African women writing their own herstories. Gathogo (2010, 2) describes Oduyoye's leadership as servant leadership. In his own words, "leadership is about foot-washing, enabling the tired and dejected to feel refreshed again so that they can pick themselves up and contribute to develop a caring, compassionate and a just community."

Oduyoye as a mentor has embodied the African proverb "if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together."

She made sure to bring many African women aboard the ecumenical train and work with them in order to have an African women's voice in the ecumenical, theological institutions. Bringing women to reflect together on African women experiences has opened the door wide for many and as she and Musimbi Kanyoro (1992, 1) argued, "African women have come to realise that as long as men and foreign researchers remain authorities on culture, rituals, and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead."

She is indeed the mother of African women's theologies. She has written and published extensively and spoken at various global ecumenical spaces from an African woman's perspective. At the 2019 Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Conference, held in Botswana, the Circle established the Mercy Amba Oduyoye Global Leadership Award, which was first awarded to her and women who embodied her vision. The citation reads as follows, which captures her worldwide contribution:

The Mercy Amba Oduyoye Global Leadership Award goes to the Circle woman who has provided visible and well acknowledged global leadership, through undertaking a scholarship that cuts across the academy, developmental communities and ecumenical institutions. While such leaders are recognised as African women, they are celebrated as global leaders, who have made undeniable contribution to the scholarship, local and global communities in various areas.

Bibliography

Dube, M.W. "Little Girl, Get Up." In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 3–24. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.

- Dube, M.W. "Talitha Cum! Some African Women's Ways of Reading the Bible." In *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, edited by Musa W. Dube, Andrew Mbuvi, and Dora Mbuwayesango, 29–42. Atlanta: SBL, 2012.
- Fiedler, R.N.A *History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (1989-2007)*. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017.
- Gathogo, J. "Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother of African Women's Theology." *Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2010).
- Kaunda, M.M. *A Search for Life-Giving Marriage: The Imbusa Initiation Rite as a Space for Constructing Wellbeing Among Married Bemba Women of Zambia*. Unpublished dissertation, MTh, University of KwaZulu-Natal. 2013.
- Kaunda, M.M. "Transforming Disciples, Transforming the Future: Young African Women and the Search for a Liberated Future." *International Review of Mission* 107, no. 2 (2018).
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, 1986.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- Oduyoye, M.A., and Kanyoro, M. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Troubled but Not Destroyed." Keynote Address to the AACC General Assembly, Addis Ababa, 1997.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Remembering Me: Memories of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2019.
- Oluwatomisin, O. "Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Her Circle." *The Christian Century: Thoughtful, Independent Progressive*, May 11, 2023. <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/features/mercy-amba-oduyoye-and-her-circle> [Accessed on March 22, 2024].
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. (eds.). *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006.
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. "What's in a Name?—Forging a Theological Framework for African Women's Theologies." *Journal of Constructive Theology* 12, no. 2 (2006): 5–24.

PART I

EAST AFRICAN FOUNDING MATRIARCHS

Chapter 3

MUSIMBI R.A. KANYORO: UNTO US A LEGEND IS BORN!

Musa W. Dube

African women have come to realise that as long as men and foreign researchers remain authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1992, 1).

We have Seen Her Star

One morning bristled with golden rays of the rising sun, a large lingering morning star twinkled from the east; a full moon that lingered in the sky smiled as doves, sparrows, guinea fowls, chickens and all the birds of the veld erupted into a beautiful orchestra. They announced the birth of a great African woman in the county of Migori, Kenya on 30 September 1953. Her name was Musimbi Angogo Rachel Kanyoro. She grew up and went to an all-girls school in Nairobi. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Nairobi in 1975 and completed her PhD in Linguistics from the University of Texas in 1980. She proceeded to earn a doctorate in feminist theology from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1999. This chapter will highlight her ecumenical and global leadership, her role to the Circle, her theological contribution to the theological world and her contribution to empowering women and girls on a global level.

Musimbi Kanyoro's view of life and the gifts she would generously give to the world were shaped by the foregoing context in which she was born and educated. Kanyoro was deeply shaped by the communal ethics of her village and the all-girls school was an important formation for her. The all-girls school experience taught her how to partner with other women, how to work with other women, how to thrive with other women and how to empower other women. Her solidarity with other-women consciousness was further bolstered by the political context that characterised her days at the University of Nairobi. Those were the days of the struggle for independence. Students' political movements were agitating for independence from colonial oppression and resisting the racism that undergirded

it, particularly apartheid. This shaped Musimbi's awareness and the need for justice for all people.

Her formal education as a linguist empowered her with communication skills, a tool that was extremely handy for her global activist leadership. Armed with solid formal and informal education, Musimbi's star would rise across Mother Africa to the whole of Mother Earth. Her work life was an ecumenical interreligious, international, developmental and worldwide quest for justice, women and girls. She began working for the United Bible Translation Society (1982–1987), joined the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva (1982–1997) and proceeded to serve as the first black African Secretary General of the World YWCA (1998–2007) in its 150 years. This would be followed by a string of other high caliber jobs in international organisations, such as the Packard Foundation (2007–2011) and the Global Fund for Women (2011–2019). In all these positions, Musimbi worked for social transformation, particularly the empowerment of women and girls' human rights worldwide. Her work was widely recognised with several awards including the Human Rights Award (1999), Women of Substance Award (2005), Global Leadership Award for Women (2005), Leadership and Human Dignity Awards (2006), three honorary doctorates and an appearance on TEDx, among others.

Into the Circle

It was upon her arrival in Geneva, as an Employee of the Lutheran World Federation, that Musimbi met Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Ghanaian woman who was concerned that while African women widely subscribed to different religions on the continent, they were not visible in leadership positions and academic departments of religion. In fact, she noted that religion was often used or interpreted to legitimate their marginalisation. African women's research and writing was very thin. In 1988, Musimbi became a member of the core group of eight who planned on changing the troubling relationship of women and religion in Africa and its diasporas. The International Organising Committee of eight, chaired by Mercy A. Oduyoye, consisted of Betty Ekeya (Kenya), Rosemary Edet (Nigeria), Sr Bernadette Mbuy Beya (DRC), Elizabeth Amoah (Ghana), Brigalia Bam (South Africa); Rose Zoe Obianga (Cameroon) and Musimbi Kanyoro (Kenya) (Kanyoro 2012, 22).

And so, it happened! In 1989, 70 African women from various religious backgrounds, regions, countries, academic institutions, faith-based organisations, ethnicities and different disciplines gathered at Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon in Ghana. They deliberated on the troubling state of African women in religious traditions, cultures and institutions. They noted the absence of African women's voices in research and writing. They resolved to form the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth Circle). The main agenda of the association was to create an academic space for research, writing and publications on all cultures and religions found in Africa and their gender constructions. The aim was to investigate how men and women are constructed in these cultural

and religious traditions as well as to reinterpret them for the empowerment of all genders. Mentoring was identified as a key strategy for growing the Circle and maintaining its agenda.

Accordingly, the Circle was eager to publish its 1989 conference proceedings. Kanyoro worked with Oduyoye and Nyambura Njoroge to co-edit the very first books of the Circle. First, she co-edited *The Will to Arise: African Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* with Oduyoye (1992). The opening line of their co-authored introduction is worth quoting:

“African women have come to realise that as long as men and foreign researchers remain authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead”(1992,1).

The sentence best captures the concerns and agenda of the Circle; namely, the need for African women to research, write and publish concerning matters of culture and religion and their impact on women. Kanyoro also co-edited another post-1989 conference volume with Nyambura Njoroge, *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God* (1996). The second Circle continental meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1996. At this meeting Kanyoro was elected the first Continental Coordinator of the Circle, a position she held until 2002, when she handed over to Isabel A. Phiri. During her leadership of the Circle, research coordinators for four clusters were established to encourage thematic focused publications. The areas were: 1. Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics 2. Women in Culture and Religion 3. History of Women and Ministries 4. Theological Education and Formation (Kanyoro 2012, 33). At the 2002 meeting, all the research areas were urged to focus on HIV and AIDS given its impact on African women and communities. Kanyoro collaborated with Musa Dube under the theme of cultural and biblical hermeneutics to co-edit *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible* (2004).

Kanoro’s contribution to the African feminist theological landscape was also characterised by the generation of interpretational frameworks and theories. It is critical here to note her conceptual idea of “engendered communal hermeneutics” (Kanyoro 2001, 158–180), she later developed into African feminist cultural hermeneutics (Kanyoro 2002).

The African woman reader is invited to read with her community—to read both African cultures and other written scriptures for the purposes of transformation. In this proposal, Kanyoro underlines African cultures as a canon for continuous and dedicated interpretation and re-reading of the culture and sacred texts. She shifts the power of reading and re-interpretation (from the dominant western academic space) to include African communities, who embody these cultures. Critical engagement is not sacrificed for Kanyoro underlines that feminist “cultural hermeneutics puts every culture to scrutiny with the intention of testing its liberative potential for people at different times of history” (2002, 10).

Kanyoro's interest in the Circle over three decades never waned. She made time to meet with various Circle chapters during her duty related travels. She was and is always available for consultation and advice to Circle leaders, whenever consulted. She is always willing to connect the Circle with her worldwide networks of women's movement. In 2019, when the Fifth Pan African Conference was hosted in Gaborone Botswana under the theme "Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Religious imagination". Kanyoro was unable to physically attend but made a contribution of \$30 000 from her personal funds towards the conference.

The money sponsored many young people from economically challenged backgrounds to attend the conference. It was also used to sponsor three post-conference publications (see Penxa-Matholeni *et al.*, 2020; Daniel *et al.*, 2021; and Chirongoma *et al.*, 2022)—all of which were edited by young rising stars of the Circle, hence empowering them with editorial academic skills as well as raising their academic profiles for promotion in the academic space. Out of eight volumes produced from the 2019 conference, one of the books, *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Biblical Studies: Interpretation in the Context of Climate Change* was dedicated to Kanyoro. The 2019 conference, which was also 30 years of celebrating the Circle, had created various awards to acknowledge many achievements and contributions of its members. For her longstanding and illustrious contribution to the vision of the Circle and the world in birth pangs for justice, Kanyoro was awarded The Mercy Amba Oduyoye Global Leadership Award. The citation is as follows:

The Mercy Amba Oduyoye Global Leadership Award goes to the Circle woman who has provided visible and well acknowledged global leadership, through undertaking a scholarship that cuts across the academy, developmental communities and ecumenical institutions. While such leaders are recognised as African women, they are celebrated as global leaders, who have made undeniable contribution to the scholarship, local and global communities in various areas.

No one was more befitting to receive this award than Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro. Over four decades of her work life, she had truly embodied the light and love for humanity in her global leadership in the quest to empower women and girls through the various organisations she served. She embodied both the struggle and stubborn hope (Kanyoro 1997, 399–410). The Circle was a great beneficiary of her grace, energy, tenacity, happy spirit and the power of her inspirational spirit. Her star has risen and it will always shine in the skies of Mother Earth to eternity. We are grateful for her light that shines upon us.

Bibliography

Berman, S.K., Leshota, P.L., Dunbar, E.S., Dube, M.W. and Kgalemang, M. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Biblical Studies: Interpretations in the Context of Climate Change*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.

- Chirongoma, S. and Kiilu, S.W. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and World Religions*. Cape Town: Sun Media Press, 2022.
- Daniel, S. and Madipoane K. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Mission*. Cape Town: Sun Media Press, 2021.
- Dube, M.W. and Kanyoro, M. (eds.). *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2004.
- Dube, M.W. "Grant Me Justice: Female and Male Relationships in the New Testament." *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 3, no. 1 (2001): 82–115.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. "Threading Beads in the Story of the Circle." In *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–40. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012.
- Kanyoro, M. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002.
- Kanyoro, M. "A Life of Endless Struggle or Stubborn Hope." *The Ecumenical Review* 49, no. 4 (1997): 399–410.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. and Njoroge, N. (eds.). *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996.
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: African Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Kanyoro, M. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century." In *Talitha Cum: Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 158–80. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001.
- Penxa-Matholeni, N., Boateng, G.K. and Manyonganise, M. (eds.). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and African Indigenous Religions*. Cape Town: Sun Press, 2020.

Chapter 4

ANNE NASIMIYU-WASIKE: SCHOLAR-ADVOCATE MAMA AFRICA IN CHRIST

Yoknyam Dabale

Introduction

Many in African Christian contexts have often understood the face of the missionary enterprise as a white man in a position of authority over African subjects. This paper challenges the Eurocentric bias by examining the life and work of a Kenyan nun, advocate and professor, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike. Although she was Kenyan, she spent many years as a nun in Uganda, and some writers sometimes refer to her as being Ugandan. She was an exemplar of radical missiology in the service of euro-marginalised Kenyans. She pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable within the Roman Catholic tradition, particularly as it relates to African women. Despite her extraordinary contributions, Nasimiyu-Wasike's work is not well known. This chapter draws on interviews, personal communications, unpublished manuscripts and article pieces to gather little known details of her life and work in the service of Christ.

Background

Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (2006, 8) have argued that women's experiences are a chief cornerstone to feminist theology and it is important here to give a brief background of Nasimiyu-Wasike's life experiences because while women share many similar experiences, women's experiences are not universal, they are rather contextual. The Kenyan Roman Catholic nun and Professor Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike (now deceased) did her work among the marginalised members of her community. She was born on 11 June 1948 in western Kenya of the Bukusu ethnic group. Nasimiyu-Wasike came from a large family and was related to Kenya's first Roman Catholic cardinal Maurice Michael Otugba (George Worgul 2018, personal communication, 19 November).

Nasimiyu-Wasike had eight siblings and her parents, now deceased, were Mr Matayo Wasike and Mrs Annastasia Nanyama (Life in Legacy Kenya 2018).

She was the first African woman to earn a doctoral degree in Catholic Theology from Duquesne University in 1986 which afforded her vast opportunities to travel and learn widely. Prior to attaining her PhD, she attended Mount St. Mary Secondary School, in Namagunga, Lugazi, Uganda (1973). She earned a certificate in education from Loreto Convent Msongari in Kenya (1976), a BA in Philosophy and Theology (1981), a certificate of catechetical qualification from Magdalen College in the US (1983), a MA in religious education and an Advanced Catechetical Diploma from Gannon University, US (1982) (The Jesuit Institute, 2017–2018 Visiting Fellows).

Societal Transformation

Nasimiyu-Wasike was passionate about sharing her knowledge, skills and possessions with the community—she understood life through the lens of *ubuntu*, “(Bantu — ‘I am because we are’) and *tuku bini*, (*Yotti/Bali* — ‘teamwork for the common good.’)”.

With that worldview and perception, Wasike-Nasimiyu taught Theology and religion at Duquesne University (her alma mater), Carlow College, Maryknoll School of Theology and Bethlehem Bible College (South Africa). Nasimiyu-Wasike returned to her homeland where she served as a Systematic and Moral Theology Professor for over 20 years at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya where she obtained promotion to the position of full professor in 2002. This was an extraordinary accomplishment for an African woman (The Jesuit Institute, 2017–2018 Visiting Fellows). As a professor, Nasimiyu-Wasike was very active in university events—she supervised students, advocated for students as dean and she chaired the religion department (The Jesuit Institute, 2017–2018 Visiting Fellows).

Nasimiyu-Wasike served as a nun and Mother Superior with the congregation of Little Sisters of St. Francis (LSSF) in Uganda for over a decade (Life in Legacy Kenya 2018). From her leadership position, she promoted the wellbeing of her fellow sisters. Prior to her tenure, most of the sisters were uneducated. Nasimiyu-Wasike believed that all citizens should have the opportunity to pursue education, especially women. To this end, she invited professionals in their fields of expertise to teach her fellow sisters. For example, she convinced nursing professors from Duquesne University to teach her community about the latest trends in caring for HIV and AIDs patients (George Worgul 2018, personal communication, 19 November).

Circle-centred and Afrocentric Theologies

To expand her audience and build sisterhood outside the Catholic Church, Nasimiyu-Wasike was a member and co-founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (now the Circle). According to Teresia Hinga, who attended the 1989 inaugural conference in Ghana, Nasimiyu-Wasike was part of the 70 co-founders

of the Circle and highly regarded as an advocate for Africanising Christianity (Hinga 2018).

Over the years, members of the Circle produced an impressive collection of articles and books that told the stories of African women in the church. Nasimiyu-Wasike's contribution to the Circle and African Christianity was her expertise in criticising inculturation but also her criticism of Inculturation Theology for not giving respect to women's issues (Hinga 2018). When European Christians were justifying the Christianisation of Africans, they claimed Africans had no culture, philosophy or religion. When western missionaries tried to 'accommodate' local cultures, Nasimiyu-Wasike criticised them for failing miserably. Nasimiyu-Wasike was among a group of African scholars who provided counter- narratives to the racist and Westernised accounts of Europeans' missions and Christianity. Her body of work stressed the importance of African culture and women's liberation. For example, Nasimiyu-Wasike's dissertation, 'Vatican II: The Problem of Inculturation' focused on the importance of the gospel of Christ communicated through African culture in order to transform it. She argued that every culture is important and can be used to preach the gospel of Christ (Wasike 1986).

Even though Nasimiyu-Wasike was a practising Catholic, she was among a brand of missiologists who respect African Traditional Religion (ATR) and believed it had something positive to offer Christianity. She believed that abandoning and demonising ATRs could be cultural suicide. Nasimiyu-Wasike was also realistic with her approach to incorporating African cultures into Christian ministry. She was careful with her criticism of African societies and the tendency to devalue African women. Nasimiyu-Wasike argued that African pastors have adopted a sexist interpretation of scripture and then presenting it as biblical. Her conviction was that a biased Christology robs women of their humanity. In her chapter, titled '*Christology and an African Woman's Experience*,' she argues that missionary usage of the male pronoun in describing God left a sexist legacy within the African Church. In order to counter this bias, Nasimiyu-Wasike argued that pastors needed to make use of scriptures that discuss positive attributes of women, such as Luke 10:38–41, a biblical passage about Martha who opened her home to Jesus and the disciples on their way to a village (Wasike 1986, 125–128).

In the text, titled *Mutuality Possible? An African Response*, Nasimiyu-Wasike discussed how slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism disempowered the African continent. For her, the western Church needed to stand in solidarity with Africans and participate in the suffering of Africans if they are to be relevant (Wasike 2001). Nasimiyu-Wasike never missed an opportunity to advocate for women's rights in Kenya. When the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) interviewed her in February 2003 about her stand on abortion in Kenya, Nasimiyu-Wasike expressed support for it in special cases. She stated that, "abortion should be administered when a woman's life is in danger" (Westen 2006)".

Given the delicacy of abortion topic is in Kenya, Nasimiyu-Wasike's remark was met with strong resistance from not only the general public, but also most

especially her superiors within the Catholic Church. Nasimiyu-Wasike was part of the order under Superior General of the Little Sister of St. Francis, Sr Elizabeth Achieng and the Catholic Archbishop, Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki, spoke against her statement. Her superiors (Martin Mutua) formally reprimanded Nasimiyu-Wasike. In 2006, she was reinstated after she repented. On 5 February 2003, in a BBC interview, she said:

I suggested that the State should legalise abortion to save lives of poor women. I now realise that this is wrong because it justifies evil means to achieve a good end. I therefore want to inform everybody that I believe induced abortion is wrong and cannot be justified to obtain a good end (Westen 2006).

Her colleague and mentor of over three decades, alleges that Nasimiyu-Wasike’s excommunication was really retribution for demanding that priests stop sexually abusing her community sisters. Sr Nasimiyu-Wasike threatened to report this behaviour to Rome. Then the cardinal of Nairobi misinterpreted her interview with the BBC and condemned her as supporting abortion (George Worgul, personal communication, 19 November 2018).

Whatever the case, Nasimiyu-Wasike provoked society to start reflecting more deeply on the needs of women and the poor in the community. Some of Nasimiyu-Wasike’s work stems from her idea of Inculturation. Even though she is supportive of Africanising Christianity and honouring the place of ATRs, Nasimiyu-Wasike still falls into the category of African Christian Apologists. She seems torn between Christianity and ATR but ultimately believes Christianity is the only way to salvation. This approach, in my view, undermines the argument that ATRs should be treated equally. Nasimiyu-Wasike wrote mostly articles and her books were co-authored. If she was able to turn some of her essays into books, it would have strengthened her scholarly credentials. Nasimiyu-Wasike used collaborative work to tackle gender issues within the Christian community and the secular world.

In addition, reflecting on her body of work, the realisation is that schools prioritise different things. For example, in the US, some schools place an emphasis on teaching while others stress research. African universities are mostly overwhelmed, professors hold classes with hundreds of students with minimal administrative support. It is often a personal commitment for a professor to get involved in advocacy work in such a context. This raises the possibility that perhaps Nasimiyu-Wasike overworked herself to the extent of neglecting her own health. This neglect may have contributed to her sudden death from malaria, a preventable disease (Hinga 2018).

As a nun, scholar and advocate, Nasimiyu-Wasike was able to find balance by working with others within and outside the academy. As the proverbial wisdom of the Yotti/Bali people of Northern Nigeria teaches us, *sele bini yagap sela tang* (one bristle of the broom cannot sweep alone). Nasimiyu-Wasike certainly embodied that principle; she understood the value of working together and her contribution within the field of African Christianity is notable. The section of DeGeorge and

Priest's article, *Doctoral dissertations on mission: ten-year update, 2002–2011*, underscores the sobering reality that, “more than half of all Church members around the world are women, these figures show a significant underrepresentation of women in missiology” (Priest and Robert 2013).”

This is alarming, because it highlights that despite women being the majority in the Church population, they still do not wield much power even as it relates to speaking on their experiences as scholars. Nasimiyu-Wasike stands out, as a nun, a position that is often portrayed as meek and docile. She pushed the boundaries which provoked Kenya to listen. In a way, she revolutionised ‘nun-hood’ and made it accessible to the general society. Nasimiyu-Wasike was unafraid to speak up despite the risk of backlash in a conservative Church and society; she fought for women's rights in Kenya and championed Inculturation Theology.

Conclusion

The Yotti/Bali proverb teaches, “A chicken drinks water from a pot because of a lizard.”

Younger scholars or rising stars of the Circle like me and many others are drinking from the pot of the Circle because of the pioneering women like Nasimiyu-Wasike's persistence to climb the pot of wisdom and pass down a cup for us to quench our thirst. Her article, *Christianity and Feminism among the Babukusu of Western Kenya* (2006) inspires thinking about research among African ethnic groups that are relatively small. As Linda Smith points out in *Decolonising Methodologies*, scholar-activists have to work hard to find balance doing community work and fulfilling academic demands (Smith 2012). Despite her challenges, Nasimiyu-Wasike fought for those less privileged in our world. When she transitioned on 22 February 2018, she became an ancestor and will continue to inspire generations.

Bibliography

- Hinga, “Remembering and Honoring Professor Sr. Anne Nasimiyu Wasike: A Concerned, Socially Engaged and (not so) Little Sr. of St Francis.” *LifeSite News*. Accessed May 25, 2018. <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/prominent-nun-professor-formally-repents-of-abortion-support>.
- Life in Legacy Kenya*. “Sr Professor Anne Nasimiyu Wasike, LSOSF.” Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://obituarykenya.co.ke/sr-professor-anne-nasimiyu-wasike-lsosf>.
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. “What's in a Name? - Forging A Theological Framework for African Women's Theologies,” *Journal of Constructive Theology* 12, no. 2 (2006): 5–24.
- Priest, R.J. and Robert, D. “Doctoral Dissertations on Mission: Ten-Year Update, 2002–2011 (Revised Edition).” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 4 (2013): 195–202. Available from <https://journals.sagepub.com>. Accessed September 15, 2018.
- Smith, L.T. *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London: Zed Books, 2012.
- The Jesuit Institute. “2017–2018 Visiting Fellows.” *Boston College*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/centers/the-jesuit-institute/programs/visiting-fellows.html>.

- Wasike, A.N. "Is Mutuality Possible: An African Response." *Missiology: An International Review* 29, no. 1 (2001): 45–53. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009182960102900103>. Accessed September 20, 2018.
- Wasike, A.N. *Vatican II: The Problem of Inculturation*. PhD diss., Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, 1986. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/7a374a921b74679fb6216b6591cfa5d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>. Accessed October 10, 2018.
- Wasike, A.N. "Christology and an African Woman's Experience." In *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*, edited by J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, 125–35. Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 1998.
- Wasike, A.N. "Christianity and Feminism among the Babukusu of Western Kenya." *Concilium* 3, no. 3 (2006): 27–35.
- Westen, J. "Prominent Nun/Professor Formally Repents of Abortion Support." Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.catholicethics.com/forum-submissions/remembering-and-honoring-professor-sr-anne-nasimiyu-wasike-a-concerned-socially-engaged-and-not-so-little-sr-of-st-francis>.

Chapter 5

NYAMBURA A HEROINE IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA (PCEA): MINISTRY IN A PATRIARCHAL CONTEXT

Jane Kariuki

Introduction

This chapter presents Nyambura Njoroge as a heroine who triumphed against a highly patriarchal context of her Church and community. Her path to theology opened ways for other women into the ordained ministry of word and sacrament in the PCEA. Njoroge was born in a Christian family. Her father was a Presbyterian clergy member, and her mother was actively involved in the woman's guild. When her father asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she was certain that she wanted to be a clergy member. She was surrounded by women who mentored her in faith. In 1982, Nyambura was ordained as the first woman clergy member at PCEA Bahati Martyrs Church in Kenya, a journey that had its own challenges. She fought battles not for her own but for other women who would be ordained in the future.

Over the years, she had been influential in the Presbyterian fraternity and the ecumenical arena challenging the gender prejudices, stereotypes and cultural practices that intimidate, limit and suppress women. She was the first African woman theologian to attain a PhD (Chammah J. Kaunda 2013, 149). As a heroine, she refused to be silenced by patriarchy and continued to be a voice while bringing along African women to a space where they could also speak out. In this chapter, Njoroge's journey is analysed in terms of her ministry and her role in advocating for women's theological studies. The chapter used in-depth face-to-face interview with Njoroge to collect data and present it from the perspective of African women's theology.

Introducing Nyambura: A trailblazer—the first in many aspects

Nyambura Njoroge is a woman clergy member admired and emulated for her courage and great achievements. Njoroge was born to Mary Muthoni Githanji

(midwife, missionary trained) and Rev. Daniel Githanji Gitogo (Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Minister). Dr Njoroge pioneered a lot of aspects for African women. Kaunda (2013, 149) enlightens that Rev. Dr Njoroge was the first Kenyan Woman to join St. Paul's United Theological College (SPUTC) in 1978—currently St. Paul's University—to undertake a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree and graduated in 1980. She studied in a class of 17 students and was the only female student. She was the first African Presbyterian woman to graduate from St Paul's united theological college with a BD. She spearheaded women's priesthood in the PCEA church in 1982. Her ordination came at a time when the debate on the ordination of women was frequently discussed. Some members of the church were for it, while others were against it. Njoroge narrates her path to ordination with joy and she is forever indebted to the woman's guild that raised the issue of the ordination of women during a general assembly. In her first year in seminary, Nyambura represented the church at an international women's conference in Europe. Her ordination cleared the path for many to be ordained not just in the PCEA but opened conversation regarding the ordination of women in churches like the reformed church of East Africa (RCEA). After her ordination, Rev. Njoroge served the PCEA Bahati Martyrs Parish (1980–84) and the PCEA (Kangemi & Loresho, 1985–86).

Njoroge was the first Kenyan/African Woman to undertake Master of Art in Religion (MAR) at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA in 1984 and graduated in 1985. She was the first Kenyan/African Woman to undertake PhD studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA in 1986 and the first African woman to earn a PhD in 1992 (Githinga, 2021). She was the first African woman clergy member to work with an ecumenical body, namely, the World Council of Churches. She worked with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) formed in 1987 and now known as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). At first, she worked as a global coordinator for ecumenical theological education from 1999–2007, and from 2007–2021, she worked as a coordinator of ecumenical HIV and AIDS initiatives. In 2009, Njoroge was given a distinguished alumnae award from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She was awarded St Paul's University Life Achievement Award in 2012. In 2013, the PCEA central committee of women's Guild 90th anniversary appreciated and recognised her for being the first ordained woman minister in the PCEA. The Mercy Amba Oduyoye Global Leadership Award and Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians recognised Nyambura on the Circle's 30th Anniversary, in 2019. She was also awarded the Circle Community Champion Award by the Circle on the 30th Anniversary, in 2019. In her honour, a group of women theologians who consider her as their matriarch, wrote a book entitled *'Essays in Honor of Nyambura J. Njoroge'—That All May Live!* (Chitando, Mombo and Gunda, 2021). In that book, Dorcas Chebet Juma wrote a special poem that pronounces Njoroge as a Sherone who rose and enabled African women to arise because of her powerful voice

against patriarchy (Juma 2021, 9–10). She is a leading African woman theologian and a prominent scholar who has written widely.

Education, Theology, and Transformative Leadership—The Voice

Njoroge attended Nginda Primary School (1962–68) and Nginda Girls Secondary School (1969–1972) respectively. She was trained as a teacher at Kenya Science Teachers College (1973–1976). Her career started as a secondary school teacher in Nginda and Mangu high school respectively for two years. She joined St Paul's united theological college in January 1978–1980. After her ordination, she served as a parish minister and later joined Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA (1984–85); Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA (1986–92). Njoroge has written widely on HIV and AIDS, theology of disability, gender theology, children and leadership among others. She wrote the first theological book on 'Kima Kia NGO', a book on African Christian feminist ethics of resistance and transformation. This is a remarkable contribution to feminist theology of transformation and liberation. Her contribution to theology is colossal: First, she has been at the forefront of sourcing funds for African women's theological studies and supporting the Circle women to attend conferences and present papers (Njoroge 2002). While working as a global coordinator of ecumenical theological education she developed a curriculum for gender and theological education, HIV and AIDS, sexual gender-based violence, refugees' poverty and mainstreaming gender issues in theological education.

Her Contribution to Health and Healing in Society

Njoroge pioneered the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAIA) which focused on HIV and AIDS education. She served as the first Program Director Executive (WCC 2008). This promoted skills and capabilities among the clergy, church and theologians as well as theological institutions. She foresaw the curriculum translated to other languages such as French Spanish and Portuguese. Her other contributions in theological education were in areas such as addressing the concerns of people living with disability and integrating sign languages as a subject in theology (Njoroge 2006). Njoroge advocated and promoted theological African education that advocated for peace and dignity of the African Christian Church. Njoroge advocated for a theology of contextualisation, liberation and womanist theology. She championed for a curriculum that utilises feminist and liberation theology in order to foster peace, dignity, freedom and responsibility.

She lamented the exclusion of women from domestic, communal and ecclesiastical leadership positions. Njoroge believes in practical theology, a critical thinking and doing theology that sees the injustices and thinks about how to engage the injustices and then engaging them for transformation. She continues to challenge social inequality among women and men and where some churches

hesitate to allow women in all ecclesiastical leadership positions. Additionally, the theme of child rights lies at the centre of her heart (Njoroge 2014). Njoroge argues that the Church should be a prophetic voice that resists and rejects social oppression and ecclesiastical injustices. For Njoroge, the Church must emphatically speak out against and put a stop to gender-based violence such as female genital mutilation, child marriages, trafficking and forced sterilisation (Njoroge 2009:7). She boldly criticises African theologies that use patriarchal lenses and advocates for womanist theology that include African women's experiences. Moreover, she advocates for a theology that brings social transformation, the creation of new theological thinking that should replace the missionary imported theology that has never spoken to African issues (Njoroge 1994; 2008). She suggested a practical lived and experiential theology that addresses existential issues affecting society such as food security, human dignity and rights (Njoroge 2001).

Nyambura Njoroge's Ministry in the Context of Women's Ministry

In the early Church, women played a vital role with Mary Magdalene and Susanne being the first ones to visit the empty tomb and witness that Jesus had risen from the dead (Luke 8:3). In 1982, the ordination of Rev. Dr Nyambura Njoroge was a defining moment for the PCEA. It was also a period of immense pride for the church being the first to ordain a woman clergy member (Dlamini 2018). She was the pioneer who trail brazed the ordination of women not only in Kenya but in East Africa. Njoroge played a pivotal role together with Professor Esther Mombo in championing women's ordination in the Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA), which started ordaining women in 2019. Ordination involves a rigorous process where one is subjected to many levels of interviews. After qualifying all the interviewees and certifying that they have a genuine call in the ministry, the last step is ordination that is done by the presbytery in a church service. Ordination involves laying on of hands to invoke the Holy Spirit. The individual receives different gifts like teaching, preaching and many others. This concurs with 1 Timothy 4:12-16 during which the person receives various gifts regardless of gender, age, education or resources (Sprinkle 2004). This is what Nyambura received—the power of the Holy Spirit and she also shared her gifting in many ways with the church and society.

Conclusion

Rev. Dr Njoroge has pioneered a lot of things in the church and in the ecumenical and theological institutions. Her passion for empowering women in theological education has borne fruit in many ways. Through her resilience and excellence, many women have studied theology and have been ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament. This is because of her belief that empowered women are liberated women. Her scholarly work and theological education is a great contribution to social justice and liberation discourses. Her celebration of Womanist

theology is remarkable and worth celebrating. She has shown resilience, bravery and an unbowed attitude over issues affecting the African continent and beyond. She's a matriarch celebrated by many across the continent. In fact, in 2022, the PCEA celebrated forty years of women's ordination in her memory as a trailblazer, matriarch and heroine.

Bibliography

- Bukachi, G.N. "Leadership Opportunities, Challenges and Perceptions: A Case Study of Women Clergy from Christ Is the Answer Ministries and All Saints Cathedral From 2003-2007, Nairobi, Kenya." PhD diss., Daystar University, School of Arts and Humanities., 2008.
- Githinga, G. "Reflection by a College Contemporary." In *That All May Live: Essays in Honor of Nyambura J. Njoroge*, edited by Ezra Chitando, Esther Mombo, and Ragies M. Gunda. Bamberg, Germany: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.
- Gorven, J.C. "A proposed reading of 1 Timothy 2: 11–15, and how this interpretation speaks to issues of gender relationships and female leadership." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 28, no. 1 (2019): 225-248.
- Juma, D.C. "Nyambura-My-Shero-She Rose-We Rose." In *That All May Live: Essays in Honor of Nyambura J. Njoroge*, edited by Ezra Chitando, Esther Mombo, and Ragies M. Gunda. Bamberg, Germany: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.
- Kaunda, C.J. *Imagining a Just and Equitable African Christian Community: A Critical Analysis of the Contribution of Theological Education Fund/Ecumenical Theological Education (1910-2012)*. PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.
- Njoroge, N.J. "Partnership in God's Mission in Africa Today." In *Partnership in God's Mission in Africa Today: The Papers and Reports of the Consultation of African Women and Men of Reformed Tradition*, 16–31. Edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Páraic Réamonn. Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1994.
- . *Kiama Kia Ngo: African Christian Feminist Ethic*. Legon, Accra: Legon Theological Studies Series, 2000.
- . "Transforming Ministerial Ecumenical Formation." *Ecumenical Review* 53, no. 3 (2001): 306–18.
- . "Let's Celebrate the Power of Naming." In *Women, Religion and Health*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 59–74. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- . "ETE Programme Staff Report 2004, April 2005–April 2006." In *World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Working Group: Ecumenical Theological Education Formation Team*, 10th–11th June 2006, John Knox Centre, Geneva, Switzerland, 3–10.
- . "Ecumenical Theological Education and the Church in Africa Today." *Ministerial Formation*, no. 110 (2008): 64–70.
- . *Gender Justice, Ministry and Healing: A Christian Response to the HIV Pandemic*. London: Progressio, 2009.
- . "A Body of Knowledge for HIV Research." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no. 2 (2012): 129–33.
- . "Teaching Me All About Women." *Church Times*, April 11, 2014. Accessed December 12, 2019. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/11-april/features/features/teaching-men-all-about-women>.
- Phiri, I.A. "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 68–76.
- Phiri, I.A., 1997b. 'Doing Theology in Community: The case of African women theologians in the 1990s,' *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99: 68–76.

Chapter 6

PROFESSOR TERESIA HINGA: THE MATRIARCH OF OUR TIME

Magdaline Chepkirui Koech

Introduction

This chapter presents and celebrates the life of Teresia Mbari Hinga who was born on 25 January 1955 and died on 31 March 2023 while this volume was being compiled. Hinga was one of the co-founders of the Circle of Concerned African women theologians and was at the Circle inauguration in 1989, Ghana. Hinga was born to Agnes Wairimu and Ernest Hinga, pioneer of African Catholics who treated their male and female children equally. This is particularly important in a Kenyan patriarchal society, which displays gender imbalance in most if not all its societal structures. This chapter is presented from the perspective of African Women's theologies showing the background, upbringing, life and contribution of Hinga to the work of African women theologies. This is critical as it demonstrates the context in which Hinga was born and raised and surmounted various barriers and still achieved success. Because of her vibrant scholarly contribution, on 25 April 2023, the Circle honoured her memory through an online memorial service, attended by all the Circle chapters around the world.

Background

Professor Teresia Mbari Hinga was born in Kenya to Ernest Hinga and Agnes Wairimu. Her parents played a key role in her success as a person and scholar. They were pioneers of the African Catholics in Kenya who gave equal chance to their male and female children, including education. In the interview with her through the WATER teleconference (October 17, 2018) when she was still alive, Hinga pointed out that her parents' encounter with Christianity in 1906 gave them a different and better approach in parenting especially in the African setup where a girl is treated differently to a boy. Hinga's parents treated their children equally and gave them equal opportunity in education. This formed Hinga's feminist conscience at an early age. The practice of feminist thought was cultivated by

her parents' parental skills. Even though feminism is a western concept, it has contributed immensely to the way in which African women scholars have criticised certain socially-constructed norms through African women theologies that value a boy but devalue a girl (Maseno & Mligo 2019 & Nyengele 2004, 6). Hinga's parents therefore condemned the socially-constructed norms that relegated girls to domestic or household chores while privileging the boys to be educated for societal leadership positions. Hinga's parents instilled the attitude in their children of undefined responsibilities for both genders, specifically her father who defended Hinga when it came to household chores.

Educational background and Her African Woman's Voice in Church and Society

The Catholic Theological Society of America or CTSA (2023) wrote that Hinga pursued a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Religious Studies from Kenyatta University in 1977 and a master's degree in religious studies from the University of Nairobi in 1980. CTSA (2023) shows that

‘She earned herself a PhD in the University of Lancaster in the United Kingdom in 1990. Her thesis on the role of women in African Christianity, which focused on women's power and liberation in the African Independent Churches, became a basis for the long journey of her academic voice in African Christianity.’

Her upbringing by parents who gave opportunities to male and female children, her involvement with the Circle and her education prompted her to recognise the position and the voice of women in the Church and society. Hinga was a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (now Circle), which is a Pan-African association of women who study the role and impact of religion and culture on African women's lives and was inaugurated in 1989. The Circle gathered and committed to study religion to ensure safe spaces for African women in global spaces and write their own experiences as African women of faith. Circle members underscored religion as a double-edged sword that can either oppress or liberate women. One of the aims of the Circle is to affirm women's worth, to research and publish African women's experiences with the community of faith and advocate for the rights of women in ways that enable women's lives to flourish as well as fighting against the radicalised patriarchal practices in Africa (Olofinjana 2010, 18). According to Hinga (2018), religion has been a major part of women's lives, and their voice is important in conversations on religion and culture. Thus, the Circle was a safe space that shaped her understanding of religion and culture even more deeply (Hinga 2018). Simon Mary Asese Ahiokhai (2023) argues that at the core of the vocation of Hinga as “a theologian, is a Spirit-led orientation toward the plights of those who live at the peripheries of society.”

Honoring Teresia Mbari Hinga, as a feminist African theologian who dared to think critically on issues of religion and culture, Ahiokhai (2023) underscores

the fact that, “at the heart of Hinga’s theological imagination was a persistent call to the academy, church and world to take seriously the transformative power of conversion.”

As a Circle member, Hinga added her voice to the voices of other pioneer Circle members to challenge society in breaking the silence on the exclusion of women’s voices and experiences. Her main entry point in addressing challenges that face women, was dialogue with women and men. Through the Circle, African women are motivated to question the prevailing theologies that exclude women, but also champions for theological models that are transformative. The Circle promotes ‘Her Story’ to bring out the stories that have never been heard, for instance, the stories of our founding matriarchs.

Hinga’s book, *African, Christian, Feminism: The Enduring Search for What Matters* (2017) examines her journey from Africa to the Silicon Valley. This is an insightful book that can be utilised in teaching within religious contexts. She wrote this book using her experiences from the Circle to demonstrate the importance of the African feminist lens in religious research. She focused on issues that impact African women negatively such as gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS. In her journey as an African Christian woman, Hinga indicated that Africa is the context to and from which she spoke—as a Christianised African woman. Hinga prided herself on having a ‘dual’ Theo-ethical citizenship (i. e. African/Christian).

The title of her book, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters* draws attention to the fact that her voice is that of a feminist. In her scholarly engagements, Hinga (2002, 81) was keen to acknowledge how Circle women have continued to fulfil their goals of finding their voice through the art of academic writing by articulating their concerns. Hinga (2002, 81) also raised concerns over the many obstacles facing Circle members including financial constraints as well as what has been aptly called ‘the politics of publishing.’ It is from this perspective that one would say that her writings elevate her as a feminist and women’s liberator. Notably, feminism is a term which is considered suspect. However, Hinga adopts Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s definition to define it, “Feminism as a simple notion that views women as people.”

African women theologians use feminism to critique practices and systems that force women to submit even in situations of abuse—practices that dehumanise women in the name of religion or culture (Gemma Cruz 2010, 134).

Hinga dedicated the book *African, Christian, Feminism* to her parents Agnes and Ernest who taught her that faith matters and that Christianity can be a liberating force despite many obstacles. In her upbringing, Hinga considers her parents feminists even though they did not know the term ‘feminist’ and may have not considered themselves as that, which is not translatable in her language. Her book is a collection of selected essays from her over 40 years of writing on various important discussions on theological matters. She has contributed widely within the Circle through her research and publications. In memory of Hinga, the Department of Religious Studies in Santa Clara University remembered her as “a

loving mother and godmother who protected her children and helped them flourish with her grand sense of humor, love of song and faith in God. As a single, mother who balanced her professional life with her home life (Santa Clara University 2023).”

In this chapter, Hinga is remembered and celebrated as one of the pioneering women of the Circle, as a woman who became successful and brings fellow women into the space of learning and teaching. She believed that equality can be reached when women and men can partner in forging a theology of equality that is transformative. Hinga’s essays stem from her innate intellectual curiosity and ethical awareness. Nevertheless, they have evolved through communal nurturing via a method called Palaver. According to Hinga, Palaver is a method that urges African scholars to transcend mere academic discourse on pertinent issues, instead fostering collective discernment and community-driven solutions. Hinga emphasises that the Circle, alongside Palaver and dialogue, has significantly influenced her perspectives.

Additional influences include her involvement in the American Academy of Religion and the Catholic Ethics in the World Church. Hinga believed that in embracing the Dialogical Imperative, the Circle adopted defining characteristics and goals that have consistently influenced the course of African women’s history since 1989, showcasing women’s determination to break free from imposed silence and denial of their presence. This era marked a significant turning point, as women were challenged to rise through transformative dialogue and the acceptance of pluralism as moral necessities. Hinga notes that 1989 initiated the bond between the Circle, African women and Womanist Theologians (Mitchem 2014).

Since then, numerous collaborative events have taken place, with some being coordinated by Womanist Scholars in partnership with the Talitha Qumi Center, established by Mercy Oduyoye as a nurturing space for the Circle. A recent gathering united African and African American woman who preferred to identify as Africana Women, with a focus on exploring the interpretation of scriptures through the lens of African Women. Hinga has spearheaded the introduction and encouragement of Catholic circles to engage in collaborative scripture interpretation as a community promoting inclusivity. Occasionally, individuals, both women and men, may feel reluctant to align with an organisation identifying as feminist. Nonetheless, there is optimism that the misconception portraying feminism negatively will be dispelled, leading to the involvement of more Catholic women and men. The aspiration is for them to unite and actively utilise their prophetic voices across various aspects of existence. The CTSA shows that, “Hinga was an associate professor at Santa Clara University and worked in the Department of Religious Studies. She taught courses on women and religion, Feminist theologies, African religions and society, religion and contemporary moral issues.”

Throughout her life, Hinga maintained a keen focus on research interests spanning religion and women’s issues, with a particular emphasis on Africa. Her scholarly pursuits delved into African religious history, its expression within the

global religious landscape, the intersection of religion with public policy and the ethics of globalisation. Beyond academia, Hinga remained actively engaged, transitioning seamlessly from the classroom to the boardroom and community settings. She showcased her expertise through numerous presentations globally and across Africa. As a panellist or convener, Hinga consistently carried the weight of advocating for the transformation of African society. She remained aligned with the Circle's mission by addressing pressing issues impacting women and society at large. Her presentations and discussions covered diverse topics such as women in the era of globalisation, religion's role in fostering sustainable peace, re-evaluating strategies for Christian mission in contemporary Africa, the intersection of religion, gender and racism, as well as the scourge of violence against women propelled by religious beliefs. Notably, Hinga's feminist voice resonated with a powerful message urging women, particularly, to challenge any Christology that perpetuates sexism and reinforces unequal gender dynamics (Wikipedia 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter commemorates Hinga's active engagement and influence on global affairs. Hinga advocated for the notion that effective impact can be wielded from within systems, particularly within educational frameworks that afford opportunities for vocal expression. Hinga held memberships in esteemed academic organisations such as the American Academy of Religion, the African Association for the Study of Religion and the Ecumenical Association for Third World Theologians. While honouring Hinga as the pioneering matriarch, this chapter also aims to amplify her voice and inspire future discussions on matriarchy, urging scholars to emulate the exemplary qualities demonstrated by our founding matriarchs. Central to this chapter is the persistent struggle against the identification, exposure and critique of the systemic oppression of women rooted in religious and cultural frameworks. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Teresia Mbari Hinga, women's voices emerge as pivotal agents in the emancipation of women both within Africa and on a global scale.

Bibliography

- Ahiokhai, A.S. "Honoring Teresia Mbari Hinga, a Feminist African Theologian Who Dared to Think." *National Catholic Reporter*, May 4, 2023. <https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/honoring-teresia-mbari-hinga-feminist-african-theologian-who-dared-think>. Accessed May 4, 2023.
- Cruz, G. *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*. Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2010.
- Hinga, T.M. "African Feminist Theologies, the Global Village, and the Imperative of Solidarity Across Borders: The Case of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 18, no. 1 (2002): 79–86.
- . *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017.

- Maseno, L. and Mligo, E.S. *Women within Religions: Patriarchy, Feminism, and the Role of Women in Selected World Religions*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019.
- Mitchem, S.Y. *Introducing Womanist Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014.
- Nyengele, M.F. *African Women's Theology, Gender Relations, and Family Systems Theory: Pastoral Theological Considerations and Guidelines for Care and Counseling*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004.
- Olofinjana, I. *Reverse in Ministry and Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe: An Historical Study of African Churches in Europe*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010.
- Santa Clara University. "In Memoriam: Teresia Mbari Hinga." <https://www.scu.edu/cas/religious-studies/news--events/stories/in-memoriam-teresia-mbari-hinga.html>. Accessed May 4, 2023.
- The Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). "Teresia Mbari Hinga - d. 3/31/23: The CTSA Remembers and Prays for Teresia Mbari Hinga." <https://ctsa-online.org/Newsfeed/13152293>. Accessed March 27, 2024.
- Wikipedia. "Teresia Mbari Hinga." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teresia_Mbari_Hinga. Accessed May 4, 2023.

Chapter 7

THE GOLDEN AGE OF MATRIARCHY AND SHEROISM IN THE LIFE OF ANNA ELISHA MGHWIRA: AN AFRO-FEMINIST APPROACH TO JUDGES 4

Dorcas Chebet Juma

Introduction

The Circle has transformed the lives of many women and men in ways that have ignited societal transformation directly and indirectly. As a means of embodying the spirit of Sankofa — “always remember the past for therein lies the future, if forgotten we are destined to repeat it.”

An Afro-Feminist Approach will be used to present Mghwira as an embodiment of the Old Testament matriarchs like Deborah whose religious and political approach to societal transformation inspired other women not to watch from a distance. Arguably, celebrating the lives of the Circle founding matriarchs from the perspective of biblical Sheronees

- Inspire women to consider occupying leadership positions despite patriarchal obstacles,
- Empowers the rising stars of the Circle to continue passing on the objectives of the Circle by raising awareness of gender justice
- Appeals to all to criticise patriarchal ideologies still prevalent in both the Church and Society so that all may live life in its fullness as proposed in John 10:10.

Anna Elisha Mghwira was among the 70 women who launched the Circle in Ghana in 1989. This chapter seeks to celebrate the founding matriarchs of the Circle through the Sankofa concept in 2024 as the golden age of Matriarchy and Sheroism. The term Sankofa embodies the concept of remembering the past in order to transform the future (Williams and Baker 2010, 70). The term Sheroism is not in any English dictionary. However, it is here used for any woman in the Bible or of African descent who displays the characteristics of self-love, the love of fellow women, a neighbour, great courage and bravery to triumph against the odds in order to emerge at the top of human dignity (Broad 2018, 211-14). It is from this

perspective that this chapter discusses the inauguration of the Circle as the golden age of Matriarchy and Sheroism.

The term patriarchy is loosely understood as the rule and dominance of men over women. Matriarchy on the other hand, should not be seen as the opposite of patriarchy (Kramarae and Spender, 2004). Matriarchy should also not be confused with matrilineal, Matrilocal and Matrifocal societies; hence, should non-patriarchal societies not be confused with Matriarchal societies (Madaus 2019). Matriarchy in this discussion means the maternal ability of women to fight for a social system in which women and all justice-loving people, are empowered to name, expose, criticise and deconstruct patriarchal structures that oppress women and any member of the community, denying them the right to live with dignity. Thus, using an Afro-Feminist Approach to Judges 4 to celebrate the contribution of Anna Elisha Mghwira to societal transformation opens up conversational dialogues for celebrating the African spirit of Sankofa as a possible liberation theological discourse.

Matriarchy and Sheroism in an Afro-Feminist Approach to Judges 4

An afro-feminist approach to biblical texts interrogates ways in which power imbalance makes the experiences of women invisible minimising the impact of women in societal transformation through religion and politics (Tavener and Crane 2018). Afro-feminism is an approach to biblical texts that gives voice to and perspectives from African women. It is an approach that bridges the de-colonial analysis with inter-sectionalism from an African standpoint in ways that allow for the presentation of African women's voices as liberation theological discourses (Tamale 2020; Ohene-Nyako 2021). A liberation theological discourse draws its line of thought from the hopes and experiences of the oppressed, marginalised and vulnerable in society (Irvine 2010, 925). Many African countries suffered colonisation. According to Saungweme (2021), "Patriarchy and colonialism changed gender dynamics and introduced unprecedented levels of gender inequality."

Even though women played a central role in the liberation struggles that catapulted African nations from the bondage of colonialism to political emancipation, women's contribution to societal transformation remains invisible. To contribute to the efforts of making the works of African women leaders invincible through the spirit of Sankofa, this chapter uses an Afro-feminist approach to judges 4 to underscore the contributions and the struggles of the founding matriarchs as a golden moment in the history of time. Through the Circle, women have been empowered to empower other women for societal transformation. In the life of Anna Elisha Mghwira for example, one encounters the Deborah of Judges 4 a matriarchal and infectious spirit of resilience, a daring passion and hands-on zeal that transforms society through religion and politics (McClain-Walters 2015, 3). In

the spirit of matriarchy and Sheroism, the societal transformation of women like Debora and Mghwira arguably allows for the lives of all to flourish.

The definition of Matriarchy in this paper has shown that Matriarchy is a societal structure which allows for the reconstruction of a society that nurtures life in ways that allow for all to enjoy life in its fullness as proposed in John 10:10 (Hee-Yeon, Hyo-je Cho, Hŭi-yŏn Cho Surendra 2013, 46). The spirit of Matriarchy sees women as human beings. Matriarchy is the spirit and social structures that are conceived and nurtured in the womb of Ubuntu. Ubuntu advances a framework of human dignity or ‘humanness’ that resonates with the notion of humanness (Tim Murithi 2007). It describes people and communities who have been nurtured by the ubuntu breast milk, which welcomes, empowers and nurtures the other (Dube 2023). In Judges 4, Deborah plays a key role in Israel. She presides over political and religious affairs of the nation at a time when there was no leadership in Israel and everyone did as they pleased (Judges 17:6; 19–21 & 21:25). In the context used in this chapter, matriarchy extends to moral authority; social privilege and control of property by women in ways that do not disadvantage any member of the society (The Encyclopaedia of World Problems and Human Potential 2020). In the life of Mghwira, one encounters a Matriarchy and a spirit of true Sheroism. In her upbringing, we encounter a spirit of resilience and perseverance. In her religious and political life, we see someone who is moved by the struggles of society and who moves to make a change through her leadership ability. So, we see that in the life of Deborah, one biblical matriarch and Sheroe, the instinct of matriarchy moves her to offer leadership to a confused nation, her moved spirit inspires Jael to act and victory is delivered to Israel (see Judges 4:18–24).

The Life, Education and Contribution of Mghwira

Anna Elisha Mghwira was born on 23 January 1959 at Singida Regional Hospital, Mungumaji Ward – Irao Suburb in Singida-Urban Municipality in Tanzania (Ajira 2021). She spent her early years as a child at home due to a health problem, which delayed her ability to walk. She joined Nyerere Primary School from 1968–1974. She then went to Ihanja Secondary school from 1975–1978 before joining the Lutheran Seminary for her advanced education from secondary education 1979–1981. She attained her bachelor’s degree in theology from Tumaini University before joining the University of Dar es Salaam, where she attained an LLB in 1986. She went to the University of Essex in England, where she attained a master’s degree in law (LLM) in 2000. Mghwira worked for international and local organisations dealing with women’s empowerment, community development and refugees (Ajira, 2021). Her father, who was also a politician, raised Mghwira (Ajira July 23, 2021). It is not immediately clear if her upbringing inspired her to combine religion and politics for societal transformation. However, it is important to note that her father was a councillor through Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and that her political journey started during the TANU era, when she was

a member of the party's youth league. Notably, in the late 1970s, Mghwira reduced her participation in politics so that she could concentrate on her education career and family. She returned to active politics in 2009, when she joined centre-right political party, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo, CHADEMA, Swahili for Party for Democracy and Progress.

Ms Mghwira held various positions like the party's district secretary and later the party's district chairperson. In 2012, she lost to Mr Joshua Nassari in the Chadema nomination for the Arumeru East constituency by-election. She was unsuccessful in contesting the East Africa Legislative Assembly seat in the same year. In March 2015, she left Chadema for the newly formed ACT-Wazalendo, where she was later nominated the party's national chair during the party's first general congress. In December 2017, she left the Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT) - Wazalendo for Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) (Ajira July 23, 2021). It is remarkable to note that in 2015, Mghwira was the sole female candidate to contest the presidential seat in Tanzania's general election in October that year (Matinda 2019, 15). On 22 July 2021, Anna Elisha Mghwira died in Mount Meru Hospital at the age of 62 years (Said 2021). Tanzania is the first African country in East Africa to have a female president.

Is it possible that the spirit of Matriarchy and Sheroism are infectious and move women to action. Mghwira certainly cultivated the space for female public leadership. In an Afro-Feminist Approach to Judges 4 as indicated in the definition above, it is possible to see that an Afro-Feminist approach to biblical texts is an African women's consciousness to patriarchy that is located within the larger liberation discourse of feminism. It is a theorisation of alternative concepts to feminism as proposed by Susan Arndt (2002:32). It is an approach to biblical texts that allows women to celebrate the spirit of Matriarchy and Sheroism. Context and vantage points open up possibilities for contextual biblical interpretations that allow for the spirit of women's liberation to flourish (Oduyoye 2001, 123). In an Afro-Feminist approach, biblical reflections are done from the perspectives of the experiences of women (Peacore 2010:14).

Many African women do transform into female biblical characters in order to re-tell their own stories in a liberating way (Phiri 2007:154). It is from this perspective that it is possible to compare the life of Mghwira through an Afro-feminist Approach with Deborah's religious and political contribution in Judges 4. Deborah was a Judge over Israel when there was a socioeconomic and political crisis due to lack of leadership (Schroeder 2014:127). When Deborah commanded Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali to go with 10 000 men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor to fight against Sisera, Barak was hesitant and said that Deborah must go with him (Judges 4:6-9 NIV). Deborah told Barak that the Lord would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman (Judges 4:8-9). The prophecy of the Prophet Deborah happened through Jael the wife of Heber the Knite (4:17-21).

Mghwira, just like Deborah, laid the foundation for the current political landscape of Tanzania. In fact, the headlines of one of the newspapers referred to her as the only female candidate in a Tanzanian poll who displayed a soft spot for children and refugees (Rawlings Otieno 2023). Just as our political Shero of the Bible, Deborah, the life of Mghwira is an inspirational story. Mghwira did not hesitate to refer to herself as an activist. For Mghwira, being an activist, a lawyer and a theologian meant becoming a political animal (Msasanuri 2015). Mghwira, knew what to do when she was on stage and backstage. Mghwira said that she had been backstage for a long time but she had mastered how difficult it was to be backstage and watch from a distance (Msasanuri, 2015). Mghwira was passionate about what she did and could fit into all circumstances. If Mghwira went to the village, she became a village woman. When she came to the city, she could fit in easily. Mghwira did not give much attention to the level of affluence (see Msasanuri, 2015). Yet she knew exactly what to do and say when she was in the company of the affluent or those who were not. Asked about challenges she faced as a female politician, Mghwira said that as a woman, there is always the question of why and how (Msasanuri, 2015). In her approach to politics and societal transformation, she knew that a woman's leadership role is very important. So, we see this in the political career of Deborah and Jael.

Observations and Conclusion

The Circle has influenced the lives of many African women and men positively for societal transformation. Many African women have been empowered to live out the story of Ubuntu. They are being empowered to live out their God-given gifts at home and in the public to pursue their academic gifts. Embodying the concept of Sankofa arguably offers an opportunity to celebrate the life of Mghwira through the leadership skills of Deborah in Judges 4. In the analysis of the life of Mghwira using an Afro-feminist approach to Judges 4 arguably allows one the opportunity to show how the Circle continues to empower women and girls for shared prosperity.

The Circle has ignited African Women's consciousness to see humanity in every black woman and the communities they serve. In this consciousness, African women underscore firstly, full (and the highest) academic training that one needs and can acquire, both in theological and other subject areas. Secondly, they underline the fact that structural and political changes are necessary to overcome subordination, oppression and coercive power relations. It is from this perspective that one can conclusively say Mghwira stood and worked for transformation in the political landscape of Tanzania with positive development outcomes. Today we celebrate the presidential leadership of African women, which has paved the way for many women to ascend into different key leadership positions (Kombe 2021). Mghwira is one of the key figures who has planted the seeds in the good soil. Is women's empowerment not infectious and a movement that ignites women towards societal transformation? Therefore, we celebrate a golden age of Matriarchy and Sheroism

in the Life of Anna Elisha Mghwira through an Afro-Feminist Approach to Judges 4.

Bibliography

- Ajira, W. "Anna Elisha Mghwira Profile | CV | Biography." Viewed March 23, 2023. <https://wasomiajira.com/anna-elisha-mghwira-profile-cv-biography/23/07/2021/>.
- Arndt, S. "Perspectives on African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African-Feminist Literatures." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 54 (2002): 31–44.
- Broad, J. "Mary Astell's Malebranchean Concept of the Self." In *Early Modern Women on Metaphysics*, edited by E. Thomas, 211–226. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Cho, H., H. Cho, H. Cho, and L. Surendra. *Contemporary South Korean Society: A Critical Perspective*. Oxfordshire, England, UK: Routledge, 2013.
- Dube, M.W., Setume, E.D., Modie-Moroka, T., Gabaitse, R.M., Kgalemang, M., Motswapong, P.E., Kebaneilwe, M.D., Madigele, T.J. *Ubuntu and Women: Building Community in Urban Areas*. African Sun Media: Stellenbosch South Africa. 2023.
- Gillespie, A., and S. Weare. *The English Legal System*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Irvine, A.B. "Liberation Theology in Late Modernity: An Argument for a Symbolic Approach." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 4 (2010): 921–960.
- Kombe, C. "Tanzania's Female President Appoints Woman as Defense Minister." Viewed March 23, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/6229828.html>.
- Kramarae, C., Lewis, S., Williams, W.M. and Baker, G.D. *Another Way: Living and Leading Change on Purpose*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2010.
- Madaus, S. "6 Matriarchal Societies That Have Been Thriving With Women at the Helm for Centuries." Viewed March 23, 2023. <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/g28565280/matriarchal-societies-list/>.
- Matinda, Z.M. "Implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The Tanzania Experience." *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 26, no. 1/2 (2019): 99–137.
- McClain-Walters, M. *The Deborah Anointing: Embracing the Call to Be a Woman of Wisdom and Discernment*. Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2015.
- Masanuri, S. "Tanzania: Anna Mghwira – Tanzania Sole Female Presidential Candidate." Viewed March 23, 2023. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201509241510.html>.
- Murithi, T. "A Local Response to the Global Human Rights Standard: The Ubuntu Perspective on Human Dignity." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 5, no. 3 (2007): 277–286.
- Oduyoye, M. *Introducing African Women Theology*. Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001.
- Ohene-Nyako, P. *Sylvia Tamale. Decolonisation and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press, 2021. *International Review of Social History* 66, no. 2 (2021): 308–310.
- Otieno, R. "Only Female Candidate in Tanzania Poll Who Has a Soft Spot for Children, Refugees." Viewed March 23, 2023. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/africa/article/2000180709/only-female-candidate-in-tanzania-poll-has-soft-spot-for-children-refugees>.
- Peacore, D.L. *The Role of Women's Experience in Feminist Theologies of Atonement*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010.
- Phiri, A.I. *Women, Presbyterianism, and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Zomba: Kachere Series, 2007.
- Said, M. "Tanzania: Anna Mghwira (1959–2021) - Her Life and Political Legacy." Viewed July 24, 2023. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202107220665.html>

- Saungweme, F.J.S. "A Critique of Africa's Post-Colonial Freedoms Through a Feminist Lens: Challenging Patriarchy and Assessing the Gains." Viewed July 21, 2023. <https://za.boell.org/en/2021/07/07/critique-africas-post-colonial-freedoms-through-feminist-lens-challenging-patriarchy>.
- Schroeder, A. J. *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Spender, D. *Routledge International Encyclopaedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2004.
- Tamale, S. Decolonization and Afro-Feminism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 2020.
- Tavener, K., and T.A. Crane. "Gender Power in Kenyan Dairy: Cows, Commodities, and Commercialisation." *Agriculture and Human Values* 35, no. 3 (2018): 701–715.
- The Encyclopaedia of World Problems and Human Potential. "Matriarchy." Viewed March 23, 2023. <http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/140484>.
- Women's Issues and Knowledge. New York, NY: Routledge

Chapter 8

TEACHING AND LIVING HER-STORY: EMILY AWINO ONYANGO'S JOURNEY OF TRAILBLAZING

Lydia Chemei

Introduction

Emily Awino Onyango, a senior lecturer specialising in Church History, Gender Studies and African Theology at St. Paul's University, articulated in her consecration address, a profound acknowledgement. Beyond her pedagogical endeavours in Church History, she is actively reshaping historical narratives within ecclesiastical contexts. These sentiments, reverberating through the felicitous messages conveyed by both students and faculty during her investiture and enthronement ceremony, underscore her multifaceted contributions. She was not only heralded as a pioneer, being the first woman appointed as assistant bishop in the region but also lauded for a series of significant milestones post. Onyango stands as the second woman to receive ordination into priesthood within the entire Anglican Church in Kenya and notably, the foremost within the Diocese of Bondo. The confluence of Onyango's upbringing, formative years, educational trajectory and affiliations have indelibly informed her perspectives, particularly concerning prevailing male biases against women, especially in the context of ordination. Despite encountering considerable resistance from male counterparts towards her vocation to the ministry of word and sacrament, Onyango remained resolute in her pursuit. Consequently, her steadfast commitment has earned her recognition as a venerable figure within the Circle, the church and the community.

Upbringing, Early Education and Career

Emily Awino Onyango was born to Mr Hannington and Mrs Margret Odido. They lived in Nairobi until she was in class three when they relocated to Kisumu. She attended St. Stephen's Cathedral, an Anglican Church in Kisumu where she was also baptised and received formative spiritual formation. Onyango was later enrolled at Lake Primary School for her primary education and then Kisumu Girls'

High School where she completed her secondary education. She later joined St. Paul's University (then St. Paul's United Theological College) to pursue a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) (Mary Walker 2017). Having been born and raised in a Christian family, alongside seven siblings, Emily developed a desire to serve God and God's people in the church from a young age. Her parents who immensely supported her as she pursued her calling to the ordained ministry nurtured this desire. Upon graduating from St. Paul's University in 1983, Onyango worked as a Sunday school coordinator in the Diocese of Maseno South. She was simultaneously attached as a lay reader at the St. Stephen's Cathedral in Kisumu (Anglican Communion News Service 2021). She steadily progressed in ministry a year later in 1984; she was made a deacon following the procedures of the Anglican Church in Kenya. She continued serving as a deacon and had an impactful ministry which qualified her for ordination into the Holy Orders of priesthood two years later in 1986. After her ordination, Onyango began teaching at Bishop Okullu College of Theology and Development (then St. John's School of Mission, Kokise).

Between 1988 and 1989, Onyango enrolled at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland pursuing a course in Ecumenism. She then attained a Master of Theology degree at the Asian Centre of Theology in Seoul, South Korea (The Street Journal 2021). Following her graduation, Onyango returned to Kenya and assumed the role of Principal at Bishop Okullu College and concurrently served as the vicar of St. Mark's parish in Nyakongo. Subsequently, in 1993, Emily was assigned to St. Andrews College in Kabare, where she began her tenure as a lecturer and eventually ascended to the position of Principal. During the same year, she got married to Mr. Apollo Onyango and joined the faculty of St. Paul's University as a lecturer. She attained her doctoral degree in 2006 at the University of Wales in the United Kingdom. In 2018, Onyango was formally installed as Canon of the Anglican Diocese of Bondo. Three years later, in 2021, she achieved a historic milestone by being appointed as assistant bishop in the Diocese of Bondo on 27 March 2021, the first female bishop in the Anglican church in Kenya and the Anglican Church in East and Central Africa, which she continues to pioneer.

Scaling Hurdles

Reflecting on her ordination, Onyango explains that she was only 23 years old at the time of her ordination. Many people thought that she was too young. Several others expressed concern about whether she would even get married since marriage is very important in many African societies, as it is perceived as a maturity marker. It is even more important for the clergy to be married. In her post-ordination interview, she noted that for her male colleagues, most questions revolved around their call, whereas for her, the central issue was whether she was ever going to get married and if so, who would marry her. The concern was, "Is there a man who will be able to marry a priest?"

That she was qualified and had a calling was not the pressing issue (interview on Calvin Cornel TV 2021). Onyango further recounted a poignant incident during her attendance at the provincial board of theological education where she accompanied the diocesan bishop. Upon the bishop's introduction of her as an ordained minister representing the principal, a momentary ripple of laughter pervaded the assembly, swiftly followed by a palpable silence. It became apparent that apprehension emerged among the attendees expressing concern that her presence might inadvertently inspire young women within the diocese to aspire towards ordination. Despite comprising church leaders entrusted with the task of providing spiritual and life guidance, a prevailing sentiment of incredulity surfaced regarding the notion of a woman assuming the role of a reverend.

More than 30 years later, Onyango's appointment as assistant bishop was met with some apprehension. A faction of clergy pursued legal action, contesting her appointment on procedural grounds and asserting financial concerns about the diocese's capacity to sustain an assistant bishop. Eventually, these allegations were dismissed. In her consecration address, Onyango forthrightly addressed the underlying issue behind such challenges, highlighting that procedural objections and financial considerations served as veils for deeper resistance to the concept of a woman assuming the role of bishop. The persistence of such attitudes in 2021 underscores the ongoing struggle for gender parity and the imperative nature of continued efforts in this regard. Onyango astutely observes that societal stereotypes persist, relegating women to inferior positions. Despite encountering substantial obstacles, including ageism, marital status biases, disparaging attitudes and ridicule, Onyango exemplifies resilience and determination. She defied these challenges to blaze a trail and ascend to her current position. Her tenacity has paved the way for numerous other women to enter the ministry in her wake. Notably, her appointment as assistant bishop set a precedent, culminating in the election of a woman as a full Anglican bishop in the Butere Diocese of Kenya.

Role in the Circle and Theological Contributions

Onyango was among 70 women who gathered in Accra, Ghana in 1989 in a meeting where the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the Circle) was launched. The Circle was founded with the primary aim of increasing the visibility of women in theology by encouraging women to study and write theology from women's and Afrocentric perspectives. The wider motivation in all these was to inspire women to write their own stories and experiences and not have others write on their behalf because writing makes women own their stories and experiences. The Circle is thus driven by the need to let women own their experiences. Phiri and Nadar (2006, 8) have argued that the starting point of African women's theologies is women. From this standpoint, the Circle advances life-affirming and life-enhancing theologies which engage socio-economic, cultural, economic and varied religious realities that characterise the contexts from

which African women theologise. The thematic areas of health and healing, the Bible, interfaith issues, culture, environment and Gender-based violence have notably been engaged by Circle members from inception (<https://worldrenew.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Gender-Equality-and-Social-Inclusion-Manual.pdf>).

The Circle also endeavours to inspire and support women to study theology and religion and to take up leadership roles in the church, other religious organisations and in the academy. Mentorship is an equally significant focus of the Circle. Onyango, like the other pioneering matriarchs, has continued to participate in upholding the Circle spirit as she impacts society and God's people through teaching, writing and pastoral work. She is keen on capacity-development of leaders. She observes that contemporary times are unusual and leadership is key in influencing development and transformation agenda (Onyango 2018). She is equally passionate about approaching ministry wholistically. She elaborates that a holistic approach to ministry entails the use of technology in pastoral work and tailoring ministry in a manner that responds to contemporary realities like GBV, SGBV, mental health and teenage pregnancies, among others in her writing. Onyango also emphasises the importance of resource mobilisation so that ministry can be sustainable in an all-rounded way. She also lauds networking—both locally and internationally—as an important strategy in impacting society towards intended transformation.

Influenced by the afore-mentioned convictions, Emily has made invaluable theological contributions through her teaching and writings which employ Afrocentric approaches and counter-narratives that place women at the centre of 'herstory.' Her 2018 book, *Gender and Development: A History of Women's Education in Kenya*, succinctly captures her theological stance. In it, she discusses women always having been present historically even when they have been ignored by illustrating how Kenyan women used their Christian faith, their culture and mission education as tools to bring change and transformation in both the church and society (Onyango 2018). For Emily, education, particularly that of women and girls, goes in tandem with development and social transformation. She equally accentuates the requisite to partner with men in these endeavours. Emily's commitment to advancing gender justice in her life and work is a reflection of the Circle spirit. She therefore joins other Circle matriarchs in offering a robust foundation and path for rising stars of the circle to continue championing gender justice in word and deed. Her work and theological perspectives are equally significant pillars in this journey. Her journey exudes hope and optimism that hurdles can be surmounted and success realised when resilience and focus are maintained. She has also written and published books and articles, among them:

- Onyango, Emily A. (2002). 'Single Parenthood: A Challenge to the Christian Understanding of Family in Kenya';
- *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*. 19 (1): 80–99. Onyango, Emily A. (2016);
- 'Women Leaders Rising Up: A Case Study of the Anglican Church of Kenya 1844–1945';

- *Mission Theology in the Anglican Communion*. Onyango, Emily (2017).
- ‘The Challenge of Gender-Based Violence in Kenya and the Response of the Church’ and
- *Mission Theology in the Anglican Communion*.

She continues to inspire change in the lives of women and what women can achieve and that glass ceilings should be broken so that there is no barrier to women’s transformation and leadership.

Conclusion

This chapter celebrates the astuteness of the Rt Rev Dr Emily Onyango in keeping the Circle spirit active, progressive and transformative by promoting life-affirming theologies, which are founded on fostering abundant life for all creation. She is an icon of inspiration as she stands alongside her fellow Circle matriarchs succeeding generations of the Circle and the rising stars of the circle who together continue to collaborate with God so that the life and dignity of all creation are protected and nurtured.

Bibliography

- Anglican Communion News Service. “Canon Emily Awino Onyango Becomes First Female Anglican Bishop in East & Central Africa.” January 18, 2021. <https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2021/01/canon-emily-awino-onyango-becomes-first-female-anglican-bishop-in-east-and-central-africa.aspx> [Accessed April 13, 2024].
- Onyango, E.A. *Gender and Development: A History of Women’s Education in Kenya*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing, 2018.
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. “What’s in a Name? - Forging A Theological Framework for African Women’s Theologies,” *Journal of Constructive Theology* 12 no. 2, (2006): 5-24.
- The Street Journal. “Anglican Church Ordains a Female Bishop.” *The Street Journal*, March 21, 2021. <https://thestreetjournal.org/anglican-church-of-kenya-ordains-female-bishop/> [Accessed April 2, 2024].
- Walker, M. “Emily Awino Onyango—Journey Into Priesthood.” In *Educating, Inspiring, and Motivating Christian Women: Historical Women, Modern Women*. <https://authormarywalker.com/emily-awino-onyango-journey-into-priesthood/> [Accessed April 2, 2024].

Chapter 9

REV MABEL KATAHWEIRE: OUR ANCESTOR AND A WOMEN'S HEALTH RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Grace Wangechi Ngotho

Introduction

The late Rev Mabel Katahweire was the firstborn of eleven children born on 26 September 1944 and died on 26 May 2007 (Mutambi *et al.* 2007, 3). From her formative years, Onyango imbibed the values of service, compassion and nurturing, shaping her commitment to impacting the lives of others. Her educational journey commenced at Bweranyangi Junior School, followed by enrolment at Bishop Stuart Teacher Training College. After a brief tenure of two years teaching at the Demonstration School and assuming leadership at Kyeizooba Girls School, she married Ernest Katahweire on 10 December 1966 (Mutambi *et al.* 2007, 3).

Early in her teaching career, both she and her husband discerned a shared calling to ordained ministry, leading them to enrol at Bishop Tucker Theological College in 1971. After three years of study, Onyango graduated with a Certificate in Theology from Makerere University and was ordained as a deacon in 1972. She later pursued further studies in the United States, culminating in the attainment of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Religion from Empire State College and a Master of Arts in Christian Education from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1982.

Katahweire pursued a Postgraduate Diploma in Education at Makerere University, completing her studies in 1987 while she was in a lecturing role at Bishop Tucker Theological College. Continuing her academic pursuits, she obtained an Advanced Diploma in Religious Education from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom before resuming her service at Bishop Tucker Theological College.

Katahweire pioneered a lot of firsts in her life; she achieved another significant milestone by being ordained into the priesthood in 1992, emerging as one of Uganda's pioneering female priests thereby furthering her trailblazing journey in the realm of religious leadership. She was the first Provincial Education Secretary in Uganda who initiated and coordinated "the Theological Education by Extension

Program (TEE), aimed at providing theological training for non-residential students preparing for the ministry” (Medicine Access Digest 2007, 3).

She focused on HIV and AIDS, TEE and later obtained her a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Episcopal Divinity School in Boston during her time in the United States.

Mabel Katahweire the Ancestor and a Women's Health Rights Advocate

Rev Canon Dr Mabel Katahweire of Uganda was in the governing council as a member of the African Network of Institutions of Theological Education Preparing Anglicans for Ministry ANITEPAM, an organisation that opened doors for discussions on liberation theologies, feminist issues and African theological methodologies (The Report of the ANITEPAM 1998). Katahweire coordinated the 1998 ANITEPAM gathering in Zimbabwe where “African women theological educators called for a community of equals in the church” as noted by Ian D Ritchie (2001).

When one encounters Katahweire's contribution toward ANITEPAM, it is possible to hear her voice beyond the grave and label her our ancestor. In fact, for Dorcas Chebet Juma (2023), it is possible to hear the voices of women who have died, beyond the grave. Katahweire was able to reach many women as a pioneer in the Circle; she was equipped with liberation knowledge and she moved with courage to mobilise leaders from Ugandan villages while teaching in theological colleges and university. Her Circle orientation towards feminist and liberation theology helped her to push the Circle agenda and establish the Circle ideas in the institutions of learning where she taught, did research and wrote and published papers (Mutambi *et al.* 2007).

Katahweire attended the October 2003 Pan African Meeting of the Circle at Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana together with Nyambura Njoroge, Musimbi Kanyoro, Isabel Phiri and Teresia Okuthe and other pioneering women (Landman 2022, 10). The convocation focused on the issues of HIV/AIDS as it was ravaging many women in Africa who were impacted negatively. From 1999 to 2003, in retreats, workshops, seminars, national conferences and pan-African conferences, Katahweire was among active African women scholars who pushed the concerns of women's health with special emphasis on HIV/AIDS. One of the leading voices of African women Musa W. Dube, embraced this call to address women's health and saw the need for a theological curriculum that directly addressed HIV/AIDS (see Dube 2008). In 2003, at the pan-African Circle meeting at Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, the agenda of the conference was Theological and Ethical Resources to face the challenge of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It is from the resolutions of the conference that Katahweire saw the need to start the Mama Health Rights Projects (HEPS) in Uganda, an organisation that she chaired until she died (Mutambi *et al.* 2007). This was Uganda's Community Empowerment and Participation Entity backed by the CSCBP (European Union Civil Society

Capacity Building). Katahweire accepted the leadership responsibilities owing to her demonstrated trustworthiness and adept management abilities. Advocating for the realisation of the Circle vision aimed at liberating women from sexual injustices, she prioritised women's health rights within the organisation. She maintained that women equipped with knowledge about their health status are better positioned to make informed decisions regarding their familial interactions. With Katahweire as the chairperson, HEPS was able to sensitise community members in *Lira*, Uganda about their health issues, and responsibilities and launch a situation analysis of the availability of medicine in the district.

In her advocacy efforts for women's reproductive healthcare, particular attention was given to the issue of HIV/AIDS. Notably, Uganda bore the brunt of the HIV pandemic more severely than other African nations. During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Uganda was widely recognized as the country most severely affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis on a global scale (Mojola 2017, 171). Like in many other African countries, there was a close relationship between the high spread of HIV in Uganda and Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV). According to Patrick Igulot (2022, 1), "SGBV is highly prevalent in Uganda and its link with HIV infection and compromising access to HIV/AIDS services is known."

In African societies where discussions about sex are considered taboo, access to women's reproductive health services is often challenging. Regrettably, due to existing power imbalances, women are frequently unfairly accused of transmitting HIV, exacerbating the stigma surrounding seeking sexual and reproductive health care services. Consequently, many women who are at risk of infection often hesitate to seek out such vital healthcare services. During a discussion with African women as documented by Ted Karpf in 2003, Katahweire emphasised the grave impact of HIV/AIDS in Uganda, noting that many individuals were losing their lives while others faced stigmatisation due to lingering beliefs associating the disease with curses (*The Witness Magazine* 2003). Recognising that women and children bore the brunt of the epidemic, she took proactive measures to ensure thorough awareness and education campaigns on women's reproductive healthcare.

Conclusion

This chapter honours Katahweire as both a revered ancestor and a fervent advocate for health rights as a pioneering Circle woman. Katahweire demonstrated a profound commitment to raising awareness among community members in Lira, Uganda regarding their health rights and responsibilities. As a researcher in her own right, she approached health issues with a factual perspective, exemplified by her initiation of a situational analysis regarding medicine availability in her district. This dedication was mirrored in her organization of the 1998 ANITEPAM Sponsored Consultation on African Women in theological education, aimed at analysing the challenges encountered by women in theological education across

Africa. The enduring impact of her life as a trailblasing matriarch of the circle is evident beyond her lifetime.

Bibliography

- Dube, M.W. *The HIV and AIDS Bible: Selected Essays*. Scranton, Pennsylvania: University of Scranton Press, 2008.
- Igulot, P. "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Vulnerability to HIV Infection in Uganda: Evidence from Multilevel Modeling of Population-Level HIV/AIDS Data." *Social Sciences* 11, no. 301 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11070301>.
- Juma, D.C. "Sharon's Blood Through Judges 11:31–40: The Sacrificial Lambs in African Women's Lenses." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 3 (2023): 7 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i3.8189>.
- Karpf, T. "A Call from the Church of the Global South to Respond to the AIDS Pandemic." *The Witness Magazine*, 2003. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/the_witness/pdf/2003_Watermarked/Witness_20030101.pdf [Accessed May 11, 2023].
- Landman, C. "Journeying with the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians on Contextuality (1989–2021)." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 48, no. 2 (2022): 1–19. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992022000200008 [Accessed April 2, 2024].
- Mojola, S.A. "AIDS in Africa: Progress and Obstacles." *Current History* 116, no. 790 (2017): 170–175.
- Mutambi, R., Muhinda, A., and Hasunira, R., (eds.). "Death Robs HEPS Uganda of Chairperson." In *Medicine Access Digest* 3 (2007): 1–11. <https://www.equinetafrica.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/MUTgov240208.pdf>.
- Ritchie, I.D. "African Theology and the Status of Women in Africa: A Work in Progress." Presented to the Canadian Theological Society, 2001. <http://cts-stc.ca/2001/AFRWOMEN.html> [Accessed April 2, 2024].
- The Report of the ANITEPAM. *The Report of the ANITEPAM-Sponsored Consultation on African Women in Theological Education*. 1998. <https://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/113889/Nurturing-Our-Calling.pdf> [Accessed May 11, 2023].
- The Witness Magazine. "A Call from the Church of the Global South to Respond to the AIDS Pandemic." *The Witness Magazine*, 2003. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/the_witness/pdf/2003_Watermarked/Witness_20030101.pdf [Accessed May 11, 2023].

Chapter 10

WHISPERS AND TRANSFORMATION: A THEOLOGY OF PRESENCE IN THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR ANNA MAKYAO

Faith K. Lugazia

Introduction

Anna Makyao is among the first ordained women in the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (hereafter ELCT). Makyao served in different capacities as a pastor. She is passionate about promoting gender equality with the belief that women are highly marginalised. Makyao championed gender equality through the Theology of Presence practised in her life and work. She worked with men and women and used available spaces to help women to speak about their experiences. In 2020, Makyao worked among the marginalised groups living in the periphery—persons with disabilities. Makyao's work in this chapter raises the need for taking seriously the ministry of persons with disabilities as *Missio Dei* among members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and social workers advocating for human dignity.

Makyao's Life, Education and Call to Ministry

Makyao is a daughter of evangelists Aminieli and Silivister. She was born on 23 January 1961 in the Kilimanjaro region in Tanzania. Her primary, secondary and high school education were completed in the Kilimanjaro region. Her call for ministry started during high school. Why did she study Theology? In her own words (Makyao 2022):

I did not want to mislead people with my shallow theology. I wanted to study theology and get content of my faith and let my questions be answered. Besides, I did not have enough Bible knowledge so; I decided to spend my five years learning a sound theology so that I will be able to deliver the message of salvation in its totality. Of course, I still have some questions unanswered, but I am certain that

theology is an unending argument. Hence, learning theology to me is like a journey which is promising in the knowledge of the Lord.

Makyao enrolled at Makumira Theological College in 1985 immediately after completing high school. She successfully completed her Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1989. However, at that time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) did not permit the ordination of women into pastoral ministry. Consequently, Makyao was assigned various roles within her Diocese as part of her preparation for ordination. Subsequently, during the central committee meeting of the ELCT held from 3–4 May 1990, followed by the general assembly from 9–14 July 1990 in Morogoro, Tanzania, a significant consensus was reached with 95 % of attendees in favour of ordaining women. As a result, the ELCT officially began ordaining women into the ministry (Injili 2013, 202; Lugazia 2008, 202). Makyao, along with four other women from her diocese, was ordained on 4 August 1991 at Moshi Cathedral.

From 1991, following her ordination, Makyao served in four parishes, concurrently holding positions as a lecturer at Mwika Bible School, chaplain at Marangu Hospital and Masama Girls' Secondary School and coordinator for Bible CC. From 1997–1998, she pursued her Master's degree at Wartburg College in Iowa, USA. Additionally, she acquired a certificate in Islamic studies from St. Paul's Theological College, now St. Paul's University, in Limuru, Kenya, between 2000 and 2001. Upon completing her studies, she resumed her ministry, particularly focusing on serving persons with disabilities in the parish in Morogoro, Tanzania. As of 2022, she remains actively involved in congregational work, marking 31 years of dedicated service as a pastor. Makyao expressed uncertainty regarding who nominated her to attend the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. However, she speculated during an interview that it might have been either Professor John Mbiti or Dr Anna Mghwira, given their connections with Drs Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro. This speculation arose from the fact that both Professor Mbiti and Dr Mghwira were in contact with the aforementioned Circle pioneers. Consequently, this connection led to her attendance at the Circle's inauguration at Legon in 1989.

Critical Thinking against Patriarchal and Colonizing Theology

At an early stage, Makyao like any Tanzanian girl did not notice any gender-related problem in her upbringing. During my interview with her, Makyao gave credit to her parents who taught her “not choose or differentiate men and women's jobs; instead, she needed to work very hard to achieve her goals”(Makyayo 2022).

Her critical thinking stemmed from the philosophical principles instilled by her parents. She contended that the emancipation of women from patriarchal norms demanded the active participation of men. Cultivating relationships with individuals of both genders, she actively engaged in communal gatherings. Recognising the

efficacy of collaborative efforts, she advocated for gender equity and accountability across various spheres, incorporating male involvement. She expressed gratitude towards her bishop, whose consistent encouragement empowered her to persevere amidst prevailing male biases, quoting Psalm 146:3, “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help” (NRSV).

During her theological studies, she engaged in deep self-reflection, grappling with key questions. These included the reasons behind discrimination in theology and Church practices, the lack of female ordination, the exclusion of women from decision-making and the assignment of nurturing roles to women while men were given leadership positions. She believed that understanding the deeply rooted culture of oppression within the Church required a thorough examination of theological texts from a historical perspective, as this approach would help one to observe, evaluate and take action. Upon reading St. Augustine’s writings on women, she was shocked by his assertion that women do not possess the image of God or true humanity independently but only in relation to men, who are considered their head, whereas men inherently bear the image of God on their own (Makyao 2022).

While she was still thinking that probably, these were old scholars, she read Martin Luther’s work on women participating in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and she found these:

It is, however, true that the Holy Spirit has accepted women, children and incompetent people from this function, but chooses (except in emergencies) only competent males to fill the office. In summary, it must be a competent chosen man. Children, women and other persons are not qualified for this office (Martin Luther 2005, 369).

Reflecting on her experiences at Makumira and Wartburg, Makyao fondly recalled the enjoyment they brought. Yet, she critically discerned that the theological teachings espoused were deeply entrenched in patriarchal ideologies. Motivated to enact change, she embarked on a journey to decolonise and deconstruct theology, starting with its core institution: The family. Introducing a concept she termed “Theology of Presence,”

She departed from conventional interpretations, emphasising its practical application. Devoting herself to the cause, she advocated for the recognition of women’s capacity for intellectual engagement and physical presence within pastoral roles. Through her unwavering hospitality and genuine affection towards congregants, she effectively challenged prevailing negative attitudes towards women in general and women pastors in particular, fostering a transformative shift within the community. Her diligent efforts yielded dual benefits. Firstly, her influence inspired numerous young women to pursue theological studies. Secondly, her merit led to her appointment as a council member in the Lutheran World Federation. Beginning in 2000, she served on the committee overseeing liturgical and lectionary matters within the ELCT. Additionally, she assumed the role of

coordinator for a special programme dedicated to children with disabilities called BCC, BCC means Bible for Community Care—she was dealing with persons with disabilities in the community demonstrating her expansive commitment to aiding the marginalised within the community.

Theology of Presence for Transformation

Makyao's involvement with various groups, particularly women and individuals facing physical challenges deeply influenced her theological perspective. Through her experiences witnessing the works of the Lord alongside these communities, she embraced a theology that emphasises God's active presence in the journey of each person. This theological understanding finds its realisation through Jesus Christ, understood as the incarnation of God. According to the New Revised Standard Version of John 10:10, Jesus is portrayed as the conduit through which God brings healing and abundant life to humanity, selecting individuals for this purpose. Despite possessing boundless power, God chose the method of Jesus Christ physically embodying humanity and dwelling among people as the means of engagement with creation (Westley 2022).

Through the Theology of Presence, Makyao acquired methodologies that facilitated a shift within her community from mere communion, characterised by relational connections, to communication, enabling the exchange of transformative knowledge. In this process, individuals encounter the divine within others who not only engage in dialogue but also provide insight into some of their most troubling inner questions. While this approach may not offer solutions to all of life's challenges and questions, it offers support and instils a disposition that transforms one's perspective from feelings of oppression or despondency to a renewed sense of joy and self-assurance. Rev Anna Makyao, preferred to foster the Theology of Presence—she was devoted to visiting families and imparting the teachings of the Scriptures. Her aim was to create an environment where individuals felt comfortable enough to open up and pose questions that they might hesitate to ask during formal church services, fellowships or conventions where such opportunities for personal interaction are limited.

By providing a platform for people to share their experiences of faith and struggles within the community, Makyao's approach facilitated healing and brought about transformation, particularly in men who harboured chauvinistic attitudes towards their partners. Numerous troubled marriages found resolution and individuals recognised the presence of God within themselves through the ministry of Makyao. Secondly, Makyao made the deliberate choice to teach Sunday school children in the ways of Jesus and how to lead lives of faithfulness, emphasising resilience and perseverance. Her commitment to this task was underscored by her adherence to Lutheran Catechetical teachings, as outlined in Luther's 'Small Catechism.' In fulfilling her ministerial duties, she dedicated herself wholeheartedly to this endeavour, aiming to impart values and principles that would shape the lives of the

younger generation. Through her efforts, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Makyao contributed to the transformation of the youth within her community.

Although precise statistical data regarding her impact is unavailable, the testimony of four interviewees serves as a testament to her approach towards effecting societal change. The first interviewee shared that, “the teaching I heard from Rev Makyao during Sunday school class that God loves us, have followed me in my life. Even when I undergo difficulties, I still see the love of God in my life.”

This demonstrates how impactful Makyao’s ministry to children was. The second interviewee talked about how their “marriage was almost dying due to a lack of trust. The teaching on trust in marriage and her counselling healed our marriage; we are now living happily with our four children.”

Family was important to Makyao and she endeavoured to share tenets of living with spouses with less conflict. The third interviewee was in awe, explaining that, “When I saw Pastor Anna in a white robe, as she was teaching us about angels, I saw the angelic character in her. I loved to be like her, I mean, to be a pastor. I thank God that for now, I am finishing my PhD in theology as a minister. She indeed was my role model.”

Makyao inspired even with a simple act such as wearing a white robe to demonstrate the angels to her church. The fourth interviewee learnt practical aspects of sharing “when she said to us those men and women are all children of God. They need to help each other. I do not want to boast, but Makyao taught me sharing and I practise it in my life.”

Contribution to the Circle

Her involvement in the Circle transcends mere research and publications. Rather, it centres on her active engagement in the lives and challenges faced by numerous women whose rights have been marginalised within both the Church and broader societal contexts. Through her concerted efforts alongside a diverse demographic comprising predominantly women, youth and men at the grassroots level, she effectively realises one of the primary objectives outlined by the Circle, which is to work with women. I have argued elsewhere that the Circle documentations were not directed towards empowering the majority women from the grassroots but from the top down.

Ogbu Kalu similarly observed that, “if the Circle does not stand where the unlettered women stand, they would merely give vent to the frustrations of people of their own class (Lugazia 2017, 356; Kalu 2006, 207).”

Makyao’s contribution to the Circle can be seen from her being available at the grassroots in her ministerial duties, addressing the oppressive cultures during family visits, preaching and teaching human rights and responsibilities, counselling and caring for those in need. Thus, Makyao’s theology of presence unmuted voices of many women, youth, men and children. She brought them into the public space

so that their faith and experiences were able to whisper societal transformation. She prayed with those looking for God's favour in their struggle but also those who rejoice in their success.

Conclusion

One of the Circle's pioneering women, Anna Makyao has devoted significant effort to nurturing emerging talents within the Circle, as evidenced by insights shared by the third interviewee, a fellow Circle member. Her impactful contributions are poised to inspire both women and men within the Circle and the Church, catalysing a paradigm shift towards a more service-oriented ethos using a Theology of presence. This shift entails a departure from conventional routines towards a critical examination of our theological frameworks through a gendered lens, thereby fostering a theology grounded in active engagement and presence. Rather than adhering solely to customary service provisions, Makyao has advocated for a prioritisation of the most marginalised groups, effecting change through decisive actions infused with a spirit of boldness. Central to her philosophy is a theology of Presence, which amplifies the Circle's overarching mission to effect societal transformation through unwavering commitment and tangible presence within communities.

Bibliography

- Dirk, W. "The Theology of Presence." *Next Step Ministries*. Accessed April 19, 2022. <http://www.nextstepministries.com/the-theology-of-presence>.
- Freudenberg, G.V.K., et al., eds. *It Takes Two: The Ordination of Women in the Member Churches of the United Evangelical Mission*. Wuppertal: Verlag der Vereinten Evangelischen Mission, 2008.
- Injili K. *Historia ya Kanisa la Kiinjili la Kilutheri Tanzania 1963–2013*. Edited by Godson Maanga. Moshi: Moshi Lutheran Printing Press, 2013.
- Kalu, O.U. *Power, Poverty, and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity 1960–1996*. Trenton: African World Press, 2006.
- Lugazia, F. K. "Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania North-Western Diocese: Telling Her-Story." In *It Takes Two: The Ordination of Women in the Member Churches of the United Evangelical Mission*, edited by Gesine V.K. Freudenberg et al., 200–205. Wuppertal: Verlag der Vereinten Evangelischen Mission, 2008.
- . "A Response to Enough Beads Strung by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians? Exploring New Agenda for Circle Theology." In *African Christian Theologies and the Impact of the Reformation*, edited by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm et al., 355–363. Münster: Lit Verlag GmbH, 2017.
- Luther, M. "On the Councils and the Church." In *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, edited by Timothy F. Lull. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
- . "Small Catechism." In *The Book of Concord*, 33. *Injili Kamili*. 2013. *Historia ya Kanisa la Kiinjili la Kilutheri Tanzania 1963–2013*. Godson Maanga (ed.) Moshi: Moshi Lutheran Printing Press.
- Makyao, A. Interview by Faith K. Lugazia. March 26, 2022. Uhuru Hostel, Mosh.

Chapter 11

BETTY J. EKEYA: A FOUNDING MOTHER OF THE CIRCLE

Ellen Chimowa

Introduction

Betty J. Ekeya was born in Nairobi, Kenya in November 1944. Ekeya became one of the founding members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, an academic association of African women and their associates, researching religion, culture, gender and their impact on women in Africa. At that time, Ekeya was still teaching religion at Egerton University in Kenya before moving to the United States. There is not much that is known about Betty Ekeya except her participation in the Circle and some of her writings. Therefore, I will use these resources, which do not adequately enlighten her path in this chapter.

Betty Ekeya as an Organiser

In 1988, Betty Ekeya was in the first International Planning Committee that organised the launch of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle). The committee included Dr Mercy Oduyoye from Ghana (the convener); Dr Betty Ekeya from Kenya; Dr Rosemary Edet from Nigeria; Dr Bernadette Mbuy Beya (Zaire); Dr Elizabeth Amoah (Ghana); Dr Brigalia Bam (South Africa); Ms Rose Zoe Obianga (Cameroon) and Dr Musimbi Kanyoro (Kenya) (Kanyoro 2002, 22). She attained her master's degree from Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary in 1972 in the United States of America. These African women leaders shaped the vision of the Circle. Musimbi Kanyoro states that, "The planning committee built on the foundation clearly thought through by Mercy' (2002, 23)."

Susan Rakoczy (2009, 114) affirms that Oduyoye's Circle vision was to create a sisterhood of African women from various African regions to discuss, research write and publish their own experiences with the community of faith. Moreover, there was clearly a need to introduce African Women's Theology from women's contexts and experiences. Betty Ekeya worked with other women who made sure

that African women theologians' voices are heard and that the vision for the Circle was accomplished.

Ekeya's (1994, 2) research was focused on the African traditional societies and how women revolved around and lived "in the shadow of a man and her existence was defined and given legal sanction by men".

Often, according to Ekeya, women were like a man's property that was passed on to the next man at the death of her husband. To Ekeya, Christianity and culture intersected in oppressing women in Africa because, in addition to the cultural norms and taboos that constrained and subjugated women, two further oppressive forces have been imposed upon women's reality, these being, the biased interpretation of specific biblical verses and the pervasive dominance of male-led church ministries and institutions. While not much of Ekeya's history has been saved, a glimpse into her research shows that she was upholding the cultural tenets of the Circle by critically engaging African women's experiences in faith communities and the cultural context in which they lived.

Mercy Oduyoye asserts that, "if one tree braves the storm alone it falls. So, the story of a Circle is that of an 'I' who becomes a 'we' (2001, 97)."

Musa Dube (2000, 11) describes the Circle as a collective of women, known as a Circle that delineates a gathering wherein individuals convene, bound by a sense of connection and a shared aspiration to uphold the intricate interdependence inherent in life. The Circle platform serves as a forum for women to confront and challenge patriarchal ideologies, as well as to dismantle gender-based cultural and religious barriers prevalent not only in Africa but also across broader geographical contexts. That is why, according to Mombo (2017, 384), The Circle acknowledges that achieving comprehensive liberation for African women necessitates a holistic approach that encompasses all aspects of their well-being. The leadership of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, including Betty Ekeya, had a greater vision and the need to put some structures in place for the Circle. She contributed immensely to ensure that African women theologians have a platform for networking.

Launch of the Circle and its Role

Nyambura Njoroge narrates that Mercy Oduyoye began gathering women's names for the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1978 (2001, 252). According to Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler (2017, 84), Oduyoye carried out an extensive search across universities, bible schools and churches where African women were engaged in theological education. Because Ekeya already had a master's degree in theology, she was among those who were contacted to form the team that would steer the formation of the Circle. In 1989, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was finally launched at Trinity College in Legon, Ghana after long work by the Oduyoye and the eight women steering the committee. NyaGondwe Fiedler (2017, 33) asserts that this marked the inception

of collaborative teamwork aimed at advancing a theology focused on effecting transformative change regarding gender inequality within both the church and society.

To accomplish this, the first International Planning Committee was at the forefront. Betty Ekeya and the Circle steering committee of women played a pivotal role within the committee, aiding Oduyoye in formulating the goals, objectives, policies, strategies and organisational structure of the Circle. With the formation of the Circle in 1989, the women took up a mentorship role since they encouraged, nurtured and supported African women to research, write and publish materials on religion and culture and its impact on women and their communities. The first International Committee's duty was also to recognise the diversity existing amongst women in Africa. Berman, Leshota, Kgalemang and Dunbar (2021, 18) assert that the Circle is composed of women from diverse religious backgrounds, various denominations, different racial and ethnic groups, spanning various ages and socioeconomic classes, thereby addressing imbalances and ensuring inclusivity within its membership.

Contribution and Theology

Betty Ekeya collaborated in writing with Rosemary Edet (1988, 8) in examining the church as a *koinonia* that teaches the Bible, arguing that should women and men in Africa ground the church theology in biblical principles, the pitfalls of the unbalanced ecclesiology passed down from missionaries could be avoided. Culturally, women's societal experiences diverge from those of men, underscoring the necessity of feminist interpretation to counterbalance the prevailing masculine perspective. It is imperative for the African church to embody the feminine aspect of God, akin to how traditional religions endeavour through inclusive practices like the priesthood, embracing both women and men in their functions. In short, Edet and Ekeya argued that as Africans, it is incumbent upon us to interpret the Bible through the lens of our own cultures and lived experiences, rather than adopting perspectives solely influenced by white Western missionaries.

Culture gives us identity and we cannot leave our culture behind in order to be religious beings; religion is interpreted through cultural lenses. Given our African identity, our theology should not be imported from Western sources, rather, it should be organically developed within the framework of our own contexts, religions, cultures and values. Despite the detractors, I agree with Ekeya's emphasis that the position of women in the African church, leadership and evangelism is of utmost significance. Churches exist to educate people about Christ, the liberator. Ekeya argues that women have a right to pursue their complete humanity through participation in church. In her article, *'Woman, for How Long Not?'*

Betty asserts that, "The ministry of the Church is a predominantly male enterprise" (1986, 146).

For this reason, “Women could be and were accused of adultery and if found guilty, were stoned to death in the marketplace but the men involved were not killed (Ekeya 1990, 222)”.

Western theology could not help the African women’s predicaments. Bette Ekeya asserts that, “although Jesus’ Good News has indeed been preached to my people, one section of these people remains poor, captive, bound, downtrodden and unaware that the Lord’s favor rests upon them” (2015, 139).

The gospel must be as liberating to women as it is to men. There is, therefore, a need to construct theologies of liberation in ways best known and understood by the people involved, including women. Edet and Ekeya observed that among African people there is “alienation because evangelisation has not been that of cultural exchange but of cultural domination or assimilation, resulting in ‘a loss of cultural and material identity’ (2012, 32).”

If we read the Bible through the eyes of the Westerners, theology and religion is not meaningful to our people. Due to this problem, people like Betty have contributed immensely to shaping the vision of the Circle to empower women who are oppressed by culture, religion colonialism, capitalism and environmental degradation. Betty Ekeya is currently in Kenya.

Bibliography

- Berman, K.S., Leshota, L.P., Kgalemang, M., and Dubar, S.E., (eds.) *Mother Earth, Mother Africa, and Biblical Studies: Interpretations in the Context of Climate Change*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.
- Ekeya, B. *Woman, For How Long Not? In King U. Feminist Theology from the Third World*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 139-149. 1994.
- Dube, M.W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000.
- . “Reading for Decolonization.” In *John and Postcolonialization: Travel, Space, and Power*, 51–57. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Edet, R. and Ekeya, B. “Church Women of Africa: A Theological Community.” In *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, edited by Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 3–13. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.
- Ekeya, B. “The Mystery of Death.” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, School of Theology and Seminary Graduate Papers/Theses, 1972. https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_papers/173. Accessed April 4, 2024.
- Ekeya, B. “Woman, For How Long Not?” In *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, edited by Ursula King, 139–149. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.
- . “Women, For How Long Not?” In *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflection by Women from the Third World*, edited by John S. Pobee and Barbel Von Wartenberg-Potter, 59–67. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986.
- . “Women’s Place in Creation.” In *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. Kanyoro, 3–243. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. “Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle.” In *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–42. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.

- Mombo, E. "Mission and Evangelism." In *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Kenneth Ross, 376–386. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- NyaGondwe Fiedler, R. *A History of the Circle of African Women Theologians (1989–2007)*. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017.
- Njoroge, N.J. "Talitha Cum! To the New Millennium: A Conclusion." In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 245–259. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.
- Oduyoye, M.A.E. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- . "The Story of a Circle." *The Ecumenical Review* 53, no. 1 (2001): 97–100.
- . "Treading Softly but Firmly." In *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 1–13. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.
- Rakoczy, S.R. "Ecofeminist Spirituality of and for Life." In *Ragbag Theologies: Essays in Honor of Denise M. Ackermann: A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*, edited by Miranda Pillay, Sarojini Nadar, and Clint Le Bruyns, 112–132. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2009.

Chapter 12

THE INFLUENCE AND LEGACY OF REV JOYCE NKI ON SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS OF FEMALE CHURCH LEADERS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH OF KENYA

Diane Kawira Mugambi

Introduction

The legacy of the first women ministers in the Methodist Church in Kenya, with Rev. Joyce Nki as a notable example, has had a significant impact on subsequent generations of female church leaders. These pioneering women triumphed against gender stereotypes and demonstrated that women can be effective leaders in the church. Through their work, they paved the way for greater inclusion of women in leadership positions, inspired the establishment of women's organisations and served as role models for young women considering careers in religious ministry. Currently, many women serve as pastors, ministers and lay leaders in the Methodist Church in Kenya. Their presence is a testament to the trailblazing efforts of the first women ministers. The legacy of Rev. Joyce Nki and her fellow female church leaders extends beyond the church walls. It has contributed to the broader fight for gender equality and social justice in Kenya and beyond. Their influence continues to inspire and guide the church in its mission to serve and empower all people, regardless of gender, race or social status.

Using a storytelling approach, this chapter discusses the legacy of Rev. Joyce Nki, the first female Methodist minister in Kenya and her impact on subsequent generations of female church leaders. Rev. Nki's pioneering efforts and as a Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle) member have paved the way for greater inclusion of women in the church, inspiring the establishment of women's organisations and networks. Her legacy continues to inspire and guide the church in Kenya with an increasing number of women in leadership positions.

John Wesley promoted the ministry of women in early Methodism. Women like Phoebe Palmer, Catherine Booth and Frances Willard are among the founding figures in the holiness movement, the Salvation Army and the Woman's Christian Temperance (Chilcote 2017). As early as the 19th century, women ministers,

evangelists and preachers had already begun flooding urban, rural and global mission fields (Heritage and Legacy 2007). The Methodist Church in Kenya in their celebration of a 150 years' existence, made the following acknowledgment:

In the Kenyan context within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Rev. Cecilia Mwenda and Rev. Maureen Jones (*A British who became a Bishop of Mombasa the then Pwani Synod in the late '80s*) served after the Methodist Church in Kenya became autonomous (Methodist Church in Kenya minutes of the Annual Conference 2012).

They withstood the onslaught of criticism and hostility from those who thought they had stepped out of their proper sphere. Methodists have advocated the cause of women and developed biblical, spiritual and practical arguments for their ministry for two and a half centuries. Today, the ministry of women is still under serious attack in several quarters. However, we all have much to learn from the witness of Wesleyan Christians who argued for women's ministry by endorsing the ministry of women (Collins 1996, 338). Women's ordination in the Methodist Church in Kenya has been a subject of debate and discussion for many years. The Methodist Church in Kenya is a branch of the larger Methodist denomination that originated in England in the 18th-century. The Methodist Church in Kenya has a long history of promoting women's rights and gender equality. However, the issue of women's ordination continued to be a controversial issue and a subject of debate for many years with some members of the church even opposing the idea of women becoming Bishops. However, today the Methodist Church of Kenya is among the first mainstream churches to ordain and install women Bishops in office.

Rev. Joyce Nki is currently an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Bethune-Cookman University, Florida USA. She has taught in various Universities such as Emory and Asbury, to name a few. She also serves with the United Methodist Church in America. Rev. Nki is originally from the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nkubu Synod, Gaitu Circuit. She is among the first women ministers to be ordained in the Methodist Church in Kenya in the '80s. Joyce Nki illustrates how faithful women when they knew they had the Lord's approval, stood "like the beaten anvil to the stroke."

Courage, defiance, perseverance and faithfulness are qualities demonstrated by the life of Rev. Nki.

Rev. Joyce Nki is a significant figure in theology and women's rights movements in the Methodist Church in Kenya and beyond. She has made major contributions to the progress of feminist theology and the empowerment of women in religious contexts as a founding member of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. Rev. Nki's path to becoming a theologian began with her own personal experiences and observations of the obstacles that women confront inside religious institutions. She realised the need for a communal forum where women theologians could come together, exchange their ideas and strive towards revolutionary change after witnessing women's marginalisation and persecution in the African set-up.

She was instrumental in forming the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians in response to this need.

Rev. Nki has been an outspoken advocate for women's rights within religious institutions and society at large, in addition to her intellectual accomplishments. She has played an important role in organising conferences, workshops and awareness campaigns to raise awareness about the necessity of gender equality in religious practices as well as to challenge gender-based violence and prejudice. Her unwavering efforts have enabled women to reclaim their rightful place as leaders, theologians and change agents within their own religious communities. Rev. Nki's work as a founding member of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians has had a significant impact on theological debate and women's lived experiences in religious contexts. Her dedication to feminist theology, social justice and gender equality paved the path for a more inclusive and fair religious landscape.

The legacy of the first women ministers like Rev. Nki of the Methodist Church in Kenya is a powerful one, inspiring subsequent generations of female church leaders and advocates for women's rights. The influence of Nki and other pioneering women can be seen in the growth and development of the Methodist Women's Fellowship, the increased number of women in leadership positions in the church and the continued fight for gender equality in Kenya and beyond. The first ordained Methodist women in Kenya have had a lasting impact on subsequent generations of female church leaders. Their trailblazing efforts challenged traditional gender roles and paved the way for greater inclusion of women in the church. Their influence can also be seen in the increased number of women in the pursuit of theological education and the continued fight for gender equality and social justice in Kenya and beyond. Their legacy is felt in the increased participation of women in political leadership roles and the ongoing fight for gender equality in the church and society where the current Chief Justice Martha Koome and Professor Margaret Kobia who have occupied senior positions in the government have Methodist backgrounds.

The Influence of the First Ordained Methodist Women in Kenya

The influence of the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya on subsequent generations of female church ministers and leaders has been significant. These pioneering women demonstrated that women could effectively lead and serve as ministers, challenging traditional gender roles and paving the way for greater inclusion of women in the church. One way in which their influence can be seen is in the increased number of women who have been ordained as ministers in the Methodist Church in Kenya. Today, many women are serving as pastors and ministers and their presence is a testament to the trailblazing efforts of the first ordained women. Moreover, the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya inspired subsequent generations of female church leaders to pursue theological education and training. They demonstrated that women have the ability to learn and teach theology and their example encouraged other women to pursue similar paths.

The influence of the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya also extends beyond the church walls. Many of these women were also involved in social and political activism, advocating for women's rights and social justice. They were champions for the marginalised and oppressed and their work helped to raise awareness of issues affecting women in Kenya and beyond. Additionally, the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya inspired the formation of women's groups and organisations within the church, such as the Methodist Women's Fellowship (Mukiri 2014). These groups have since grown and expanded their mission to include women's empowerment, education and community development. One notable author who has written extensively on this topic is Esther Mombo who in her book, examines the role of women in church leadership in Kenya and other African countries. She notes that the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya played a pivotal role in challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for women's inclusion in church leadership (Mukiri 2014). Subsequently, Dr Wanjiru M. Gitau, a lecturer at the United States International University-Africa and author of the book, *"Women's Spiritual Leadership in Africa: Tempered Radicals and Critical Servant Leaders,"* examines the role of women in church leadership in Kenya and other African countries. She notes that the first ordained Methodist women in Kenya challenged traditional gender roles and paved the way for greater inclusion of women in church leadership (Gitau 2010).

The legacy of the first women ministers in the Methodist Church in Kenya is a significant one with their influence felt by subsequent generations of female church leaders. Through their pioneering efforts, they paved the way for greater inclusion of women in the church and demonstrated that women can effectively lead and serve as ministers. One notable example of the influence of the first women ministers is seen in the establishment of the Methodist Women's Fellowship in Kenya. This organisation was formed in the 1960s and was inspired by the leadership and example of the first women ministers. The Fellowship has since grown and expanded its mission to include women's empowerment, education and community development (Kinoti 2019).

Another example is the increased number of women who have been ordained as ministers in the Methodist Church in Kenya. Today, there are many women serving as pastors and ministers and their presence is a testament to the trailblazing efforts of the first women ministers. Moreover, the legacy of the first women ministers in the Methodist Church in Kenya extends beyond the church walls. Many of these women were also involved in social and political activism, advocating for women's rights and social justice. They were champions for the marginalised and oppressed and their work helped to raise awareness of issues affecting women in Kenya and beyond.

In a study conducted by Rev. Dr Mary Kinoti, an ordained minister in the Methodist Church in Kenya and the current Vice-Chancellor of the Kenya Methodist University, shows that although 45 percent felt that generally ordained women are not empowered, the study revealed that Wesleyan women in MCK are

actually empowered as evidenced by the positions of leadership that they occupy such as office of synod bishop, Connexional Deputy Director of Missions, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Connexional Women Coordinator as well as superintendent ministers (2019). Women excelled in pastoral care and prayer. However, a serious gap in skills and competency for leadership at top level positions was identified. Methodist women have also had a privilege to participate in international forums and summits. According to Ken, Collins and Jason (2016), MCK took part in the concretisation processes for the United Nations (UN) and World Council of Churches (WCC). It is evident that based on the current list of Ministers in carrying out the Church's mission to change lives for Christ and call people to social holiness, women like Rev. Dr Joyce Nki who are trailblazers broke the ceiling and opened doors for many others who have after them. Only when ordained women are given the opportunity to lead at all levels will the organisation's mission to "spread Scriptural Holiness through the land by the proclamation of the Evangelical Faith and declare its influence in its unflattering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission' (Deed of foundation and Deed of Church Order 1968, 10) be fully realised."

It appears that at MCK, empowering ordained women in leadership entails having their ordination recognised and having access to theological resources.

In Kinoti's article (2019), the testimony of Rev. Ann (actual name withheld) is expressed as follows:

I have witnessed the Lord expand my bounds. My goal of earning a master's degree from an international university was realised. I now have the freedom and exposure to share the gospel with no fear wherever in the globe.

This demonstrates unequivocally that ministry leadership really gives women pastors the opportunity for autonomy, freedom and networking, which enhances their productivity and influence. This has given female ministers who have had an opportunity to lead or even interact with international forums the inspiration to organise initiatives that boost girls' education and encourage more women to enter the ministry.

Challenges and success stories

The Methodist Church in Kenya is among the first mainstream churches to ordain women into the ministry of word and sacrament. However, it was not without challenges. The standing order of the Methodist Church of Kenya allows both ordained men and women to have equal possibilities for leadership but the Church, which is organised with conferences at the top and synods and circuits at the bottom, has always excluded ordained women from top-level leadership. Women are underrepresented both at the synod and circuit leadership levels (Kinoti 2019). This discrepancy raises questions about how Wesleyan pragmatic theology, which places an emphasis on orthopraxy, is applied in terms of enabling consecrated

women to engage in all facets of church leadership. There is also a gap in the church archives' documentation of ordained women's leadership and experiences in the Methodist Church of Kenya. The works of Joyce Nki, Grace Imathiu, Celina Mwenda and others have not been documented for future generations to learn about the paths walked by these courageous women. This chapter written in celebration of Rev. Joyce Nki as the founding Matriarch of the Circle is a step in the right direction when it comes to the documentation of women's resilience.

Conclusion

The Circle is a vibrant network of women theologians from various religious traditions dedicated to criticising patriarchal standards and pushing for gender equality within religious traditions. It provides a forum for women to engage in theological conversation, scholarly inquiry and grassroots activism. Rev. Nki's objective for the Circle was to create a safe space for women theologians to share their unique ideas, challenge standard interpretations and alter theological dialogue from a feminist viewpoint. Rev. Joyce Nki has actively contributed to the development of feminist theology through her engagement in the Circle. She has authored several papers and given thought-provoking speeches on the nexus of gender, faith and social justice. Her work is concerned with theological and philosophical issues.

Bibliography

- Chilcote, P.W. *The Methodist Defense of Women in Ministry: A Documentary History*. New York: Paperback, 2017.
- Collins, V.T. "Walking in Light, Walking in Darkness: The Story of Women's Changing Rhetorical Space in Early Methodism." *Rhetoric Review* 14, no. 2 (1996): 336–354.
- Deed of foundation and Deed of Church Order. Methodist Church of Kenya. 1968.
- Heritage & Legacy. "Issue 14(4)." 2007. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.31880509>.
- Collins, K.E. and Vickers, J.E. *Leadership in the Wesleyan Way: An Anthology for Shaping Leaders in Wesleyan Thought and Practice*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016.
- Kinoti, M. "Conceptualisation of Empowerment of Ordained Women in Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition as Exhibited in the Methodist Church in Kenya." Accessed May 15, 2023. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355476424>.
- Mukiri, K.A. "The Role of Women Groups in The Methodist Church in Kenya: The Complexity of Fighting Against Poverty." Unpublished Master's Thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2014. <https://mfopen.mf.no/mf-xmlui/handle/11250/223599?show=full>. Accessed May 15, 2023.
- Mombo, E. "Women as Church Leaders: Implications for Theology and Ministry in Africa."
- Gitau, W.M. *Women's Spiritual Leadership in Africa: Tempered Radicals and Critical Servant Leaders*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010.

PART II

POEMS

Chapter 13

ENCOUNTERING THE VOICE OF PROFESSOR ANNE KUBAI: THE CIRCLE MATRIARCH ON THE ART OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Dorcas Chebet Juma

Introduction

This chapter celebrates the contribution of Professor Anne Kubai who is one of the founding matriarchs of the Circle of Concerned African women theologians (the Circe). She is a Kenyan woman, an Associate Professor of World Christianity and Inter-religious Studies, currently working at Södertörn University in Sweden. Professor Kubai holds a PhD from the University of London. She is a member of several academic associations, among them the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle). As a prolific author and researcher, she has scholarly works on inter-religious relations, human development, international migration, peace and conflict, gender issues and psychosocial studies. This volume is relevant because she found a voice to contribute to the critical area of inter-religious relations. Some of her selected scholarly works include, but are not limited to:

- Kubai, A. and Ahlberg, B. M. (2013), 'Making and unmaking ethnicities in the Rwandan context: Implication for gender-based violence, health and wellbeing of women,'
- Kubai, A. (2015). 'Being here and there: Migrant communities in Sweden and the conflicts in the Horn of Africa'. In Fasil Demissie (Ed.), 'Africans on the Move: Migration, Diaspora and Development Nexus (pp. 76-90).
- Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge and Kubai, Anne (2016), "'Confession" and "Forgiveness" as a strategy for development in post-genocide Rwanda' among other scholarly works.

Kubai's scholarly engagements leave an impression of an interfaith peace scholar and a concerned African woman scholar who understands an entry point to various contexts.

Who is Professor Anne Kubai?

Anne Kubai once described herself and her journey in the following poem:

MY JOURNEY

My journey has been long,
Because I belong to humanity,
I belong to the beautiful grass-coated undulating hills of the South,
I belong to the beautiful snow-covered landscapes of the North,
I belong to the world, to humanity.
My journey has been long,
Through smooth and ragged terrain of the South and the North,
Why do I journey through the thicket of life?
That is me, a woman.
A woman of many worlds.
A woman scholar?
Yes, woman scholar across the seas and mountains,
Across the South and the North.
Going back, I go back and take, like Sankofa,
I reclaim my past and move forward anew.
My past and my present are my future.
It is a journey through the surreal and the temporal, location and dislocation.
The journey's inherent contradictions are no deterrent.
I go back and take, I go forward and confer
Sankofa is not one-way, it is a dual heritage
Anne Kubai 19-9-2008, Stockholm.

In a Zoom interview in 2023, Professor Anne Kubai shared that she is currently a researcher in the School of Historical and Contemporary Studies at Södertörn University, Sweden. Kubai is an extraordinary professor in the Institute of Gender Studies at the University of South Africa. She is also an affiliated Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Her research interests include genocide, mass atrocities, religion, peace-building, conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, transitional justice, international migration and human trafficking, human security and psychosocial studies. She has a keen interest in the nexus between humanitarian development and peace-building. Kubai worked with various universities and organisations in Kenya and Rwanda for many years. She worked as a research director for Life & Peace Institute, an international ecumenical centre for peace research and action in Uppsala, Sweden. Kubai also worked as a senior social scientist at the Division of Global Health (IHCAR), Department of Public Health Sciences at Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden.

Until recently, she was a researcher at the Centre for Multidisciplinary Research on Racism (CEMFOR) at the Department of Theology, Uppsala University. She has served as a visiting professor and affiliated research fellow in several institutions in different countries. She has also won several international research grant awards. Kubai has published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles; she has contributed to anthologies, co-edited anthologies, research reports and popular science articles. Kubai has produced two documentaries and appeared in an international expert documentary (University of Cologne 2021 and LinkedIn 2023). Her curiosity about the impact of mobility, forced migration and displacement on both individuals and communities, has driven her to explore various aspects of this phenomenon. She researches subjects such as the experiences of violence among African women migrants, the psychosocial well-being of refugees, the challenges faced by undocumented women migrants in relation to violence, the plight of women who have become victims of human trafficking and forced into prostitution, as well as various other categories of immigrants. Methodologically, she draws on various qualitative and empirical approaches and incorporates a diverse array of methods and theoretical perspectives.

The Implication of Kubai's Scholarly Voice to the Circle

One of the objectives of the Circle is to stimulate African women to write and publish theological literature from their own experiences (Ayanga 2016). In this way, it is possible for African women to voice out and name, criticise, expose and deconstruct systemic and patriarchal structures, which prevent the lives of all from flourishing (Juma 2003, 3-4). Additionally, writing and publishing offer African women an opportunity to penetrate scholarly spaces that have historically been dominated by men. In many African communities, for example, women are central in peace building. Yet, when it comes to issues that impact individual and community life and well-being such as interreligious dialogue; it is men's voices and, in some cases, foreign voices that have continued to dominate scholarly engagements (see for example Nicolson 1991; Smock 2002; Tanye 2010; Magesa 2010; Mwakimako 2010; S. Ariarajah 2017; Suomala 2012). Speaking about the Circle as a space where African women's voices are emboldened to speak out against injustices, Ayanga (2016, 1) has observed that, "The Circle has been and continues to be the voice for and on behalf of the African woman in religion, culture and theology."

Thus, the publications of Kubai as a pioneer and member of the Circle fulfil the legacy of the Circle in the following major way: As a gender equality voice who has made a significant contribution in underscoring social-economic reconstruction of a fractured society, where reconciliation and healing are of utmost importance. In her article *Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape* (2007), Kubai analyses how the horrific genocide of 1994, left Rwanda's traditional mainline churches bloodied and the Christian faith seriously challenged. Yet in her voice

(Kubai 2023) on how Rwandans have appropriated the concept of forgiveness in rebuilding their lives and the social fabric after the genocide, one gets hope that religion can play a key role in helping a broken nation to arise from the ashes of genocide and rebuild life. Additionally, Kubai's scholarly voice highlighted the plight of women and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda who were living in the shadow of the genocide (Kubai 2008).

Kubai's voice is arguably the brave voice of a concerned African woman scholar that carries with it the potential to transform the national AIDS response towards HIV in general. As a concerned African woman scholar, Kubai also added her voice to the justice and reconciliation issues of the Rwandan genocide by publishing the article *Between Justice and Reconciliation: The Survivors of Rwanda* (2007). For Kubai, the dilemma was in the difficulty to affirm the victims, punish the perpetrators and simultaneously bring about reconciliation between them. In all of Kubai's publications, it is possible to see that African women are not after all passive recipients of injustices (Juma 2022, 203). Our Pioneer Matriarchs are indeed concerned African women scholars.

Conclusion

The Sankofa 2024 celebration of the Circle pioneer matriarch has made it possible to encounter and share the voice of Professor Anne Kubai with the world. This is one way of recognising the role and contribution of women in creative writing and the art of academic writing. In the *Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University* (2011), Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziase (Eds) encourage Kenya women whose voices are constantly silenced by unjust societal systems to sing if they are unable to write. In the same spirit, Kubai's voice in the art of academic writing is an encouragement to African women who may be unable to write about their own experiences. Women's voices are essential to breaking the bias in the African scholarly space that is constantly dominated by narratives that foster male dominance over women. It is from this perspective that the voice of Anne Kubai has left a lasting legacy as an interfaith peace scholar and a concerned African woman scholar.

Bibliography

- Ariarajah, S.W. *Strangers or Co-Pilgrims? The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue on Christian Faith and Practice*. 1517 Media, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tm7h3r>.
- Ayanga, O.H. "Voice of the Voiceless: The Legacy of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 2 (2016): 1–6.
- Juma, D.C. "Sharon's Blood Through Judges 11:31–40: The Sacrificial Lambs in African Women's Lenses." *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 3 (2023): 1–7.
- . "Tamar's Voice in the Context of Covid19: ReReading 2 Samuel 13 for the Dignity of Women's Sexuality." In *Law, Religion, Health and Healing in Africa*, edited by M. C. Green, F. Kabata, and F. Sibanda, Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2022.

- Kubai, A., and Ahlberg, B.M. "Making and Unmaking Ethnicities in the Rwandan Context: Implications for Gender-Based Violence, Health, and Wellbeing of Women." *Ethnicity and Health* 18, no. 5 (2013): 469–482.
- Kubai, A. "Moving On: Wrestling with Forgiveness in Post-Genocide Rwanda." In *The Lived Experience of Forgiveness: Phenomenological and Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Steen Halling, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books (The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group), 2013.
- . "Being Here and There: Migrant Communities in Sweden and the Conflicts in the Horn of Africa." *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013): 174–188.
- . "Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape." *Exchange* 36, no. 2 (2007): 198–214. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254307X176606>.
- . "Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land': Challenges and New Frontiers for African Churches in Sweden." In *Babel Is Everywhere! Migration, Religion, and Diaspora in Global Perspectives*, edited by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Andrea Fröchtling, and Andreas Kunz-Lübcke, 251–266. Peter Lang, 2013.
- . "Conducting Fieldwork in Rwanda: Listening to Silence and Processing Experiences of Genocide." In *Engaging Violence: Trauma, Memory and Representation*, edited by Ivana Macek, 111–126. London: Routledge, 2014.
- . "'Confession' and 'Forgiveness' as a Strategy for Development in Post-Genocide Rwanda." *HTS Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–9.
- . *My Journey*. Stockholm, 2009.
- Magesa, L. *African Religion in the Dialogue Debate: From Intolerance to Coexistence*. Berlin: Lit, 2010.
- Mombo, E., and Joziassse, H. (eds.). *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*. Limuru, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, 2011.
- Nicolson, R. "Religious Pluralism and the New South Africa: Dove of Peace or a Dead Duck? A Critical Evaluation of the Religious Pluralism of Michael Barnes and Paul Knitter." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 4, no. 1 (1991): 67–82.
- Smock, R. D. *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002.
- Suomala, K. "Complex Religious Identity in the Context of Interfaith Dialogue." *CrossCurrents* 62, no. 3 (2012): 360–370.
- Tanye, K.G. *The Church-as-Family and Ethnocentrism in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Berlin: Lit, 2010.
- University of Cologne. "Anne Kubai." <https://se.linkedin.com/in/anne-kubai-27128320b>. Accessed May 4, 2023

Chapter 14

REV. CANON MARY AUMA OWUOR JALANGO: A TRUE MEASURING ROD AND A MATRIARCH

Wayua Kiilu

Introduction and Background

There is jubilation when a baby is born in a family. Seventy years ago, in a village called Konia situated in Anyiko Yala within the Gem location of Siaya County, Kenya, the sound of a newborn's cry echoed through the village—it was a girl, named Mary Auma. Mary was born to the late Nathaniel Olwana Sika and Mama Risper Pamela Ohiwa Olwana in 1953. She is the firstborn in a family of eight—four girls and four boys. Jalango was born to an architect father who took good care of them. Her mother, a very active businessperson, was a tailor who also owned a butchery. Jalango and her siblings enjoyed a tranquil upbringing during their early years. However, their lives took a drastic turn following the passing of their father. Despite this profound loss, Jalango's mother remained resilient and persevered, steadfastly navigating the challenges that came their way. “My mother was a lion lady who did her best to bring us up single-handedly”, Mary explained.

Jalango attributes her aptitude for mathematics to her parents, both of whom possessed a deep passion for the subject. Raised in a household that prioritised faith and diligence in studies, she was instilled with a reverence for God and a commitment to academic excellence from a young age. Jalango credits her mother's strong work ethic as a guiding force in her life, serving as a pillar of support. Furthermore, her mother's unwavering belief in gender equality shaped Mary's worldview significantly. By assigning both boys and girls equal responsibilities such as household chores, cooking and farm work, Mary's mother fostered a sense of gender equity within the family. Jalango acknowledges that she gleaned valuable lessons from education, home management, emotional intelligence, social interaction and spirituality from her mother's exemplary traits. These lessons have not only enriched her personal development but have also informed her compassionate outlook on life, enabling her to engage empathetically with both society and the natural world.

Marriage, Family and Education

Jalango enrolled at Anyiko Primary School in 1958 at the tender age of five. Remarkably bright, she took the Common Entrance Examination while in class four and was the only girl to pass, despite being underage. Her academic prowess continued to shine as she progressed to class six where she was chosen to undertake a special test in 1964. Consequently, she attended Kikuyu secondary school between 1965 and 1966. However, financial constraints led to a change in plans and she was directed to Butere Teachers College where she also completed her class eight studies. This marked the culmination of her class eight education, as the educational system was undergoing a transition at that time. Jalango married Joseph Owuor Jalango on 17 December 1968. The ceremony was held at the then Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) St. Stephen's Kisumu currently Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK). Their marriage was solemnised by the late archbishop of Kenya the Most Rev. Festo Olang. Unfortunately, on 10 August 2000, Mary was widowed when her husband passed on—they had six children.

Jalango proudly identifies as an alumnus of Alliance Girls High School. Following her secondary education, she pursued further studies at Butere Teachers Training College, completing her training in 1970. Subsequently, in 1973, she enrolled at Kenya Polytechnic for advanced studies, successfully graduating in 1974. Equipped with a teaching qualification, she embarked on her career, teaching in various locations including Nakuru, Nairobi and Kisumu. While teaching in Kisumu, Jalango harboured ambitions for higher education beyond her diploma. This led her to secure admission at the University of Nairobi, Kikuyu Campus where she pursued a bachelor's degree in business administration (BBA). Between 1974 and 1978, Jalango was affiliated with Aghakhan School. In 1978, she assumed the role of Chairperson for Curriculum Development at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) where she served until 1980. Her dedication to education led to her appointment as an Inspector of Schools in 1989. Jalango's achievements extend beyond academia. She successfully secured funding for a proposal from the Aghakhan Foundation in Geneva, facilitated by Dr Jeremy Greenland. Additionally, she holds a certificate in Entrepreneurship Education from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). Later, from 1994–1997, she pursued a master's degree in a theological seminary in Virginia in the United States.

Jalango's Societal Contribution as a Measuring Rod

Jalango was ordained in 2000 following the burial of her husband in Siaya. In 2015, she was further honoured with the title of canon. Beyond her religious duties, Jalango actively engages in various community roles, serving as the commissary of the Girl Guides Association in Kisumu and holding membership in the National Council of Girl Guides. Additionally, she acts as the patron of the Kisumu Municipal

Choir, chairs the Kisumu Municipal Teachers' Housing Circle (KIMUTE) and is a member of the East African Women League where she advocates for initiatives such as settling street children. Moreover, Jalango contributes her expertise and leadership to the Business and Professional Women's Club.

Jalango held the position of Mothers Union treasurer and has played a critical role in establishing training centres for young girls who have dropped out of school, imparting skills in tie-and-dye techniques. Additionally, she actively serves as a Lay Reader at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Engaged in continuous theological education, Mary was a student of Theological Education by Extension (TEE). She represented the Maseno South Diocese in partner missions and held the esteemed role of Diocesan Education Secretary within the larger Nyanza Province. Jalango's dedication to her faith extended beyond local boundaries; she penned a proposal to the Church of England which facilitated funding for her endeavours. Transitioning to development programme, she assumed the role of Development Officer within the Diocese where she continued her unwavering service. Jalango's leadership was not confined to religious circles; she also served as the National Chairperson of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) Kisumu branch. During her tenure, she spearheaded initiatives such as securing a Jumia office with the assistance of Rev. Kobia and Rev. Mutava Musyimi, a project that continues to thrive today.

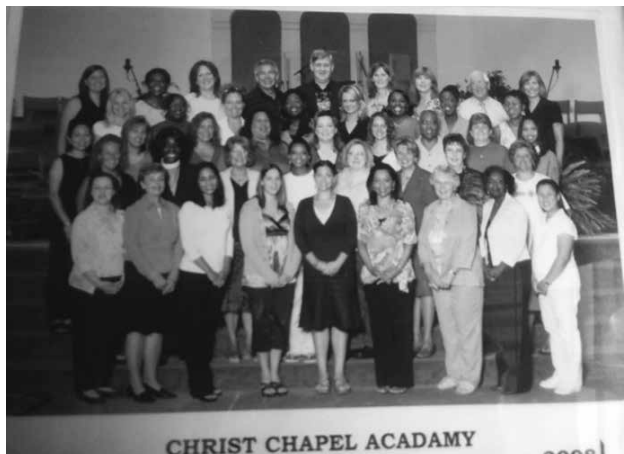
Due to her background in writing, Mary attended the Provincial Board of Theological Education under Bishop Gitaari who later ascended to the role of Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya. She contributed significantly as one of the authors of the Kenyan Anglican Modern Prayer Book. Jalango presented this book at the Anglican Communion of Africa during the Kanamai Working Committee of the Women's Desk. Subsequently, Jalango served as the Principal of the Christian Industrial Training College (CITC) where she introduced computer studies and successfully secured funding for this initiative through the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe e.V (EZE) in Germany.

Recognised for her leadership and contributions, Jalango was awarded a scholarship by the National Council of Churches (NCCCK) to pursue studies at Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, specialising in Ecumenical Studies from 1988–1989. Jalango's commitment to ecumenical engagement was further demonstrated when she attended the All-African Conference of Churches (AACC) assembly in Lome, Togo in 1987. Her exemplary leadership qualities led to her election as a member of the council during this assembly. Subsequently, she assumed the roles of AACC chaplain in 1989 and AACC Youth Assembly patron in Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo. Jalango's trajectory continued to ascend, culminating in her election as Vice President of the AACC by the late Bishop Desmond Tutu during a gathering in Harare. Her multifaceted contributions have left a lasting impact on both the religious and educational landscapes within Kenya and beyond.

Rev. Mary represented the churchwomen in the writing of the Kenyan constitution in accompaniment of law gurus such as Prof Kivutha Kibwana, Wanjala and Mutava Musyimi who was the chair for the NCKK at that time (Okubasu 2019). Through her participation in constitutional drafting, Jalango secured funding from the NCKK for global travel. During these journeys, she observed a consistent pattern—women were significantly underrepresented on crucial government committees. In the USA Diocese of Virginia, Mary was the education secretary and assistant pastor at St. Michael and All Angels. She was also a member of the societal committee that dealt with the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Mary engaged in various hobbies and income-generating activities such as hotel management during the evening hours, banking and finance management and also the clothing industry. Rev. Jalango played a significant role in representing churchwomen in the drafting of the Kenyan constitution, alongside legal experts such as Prof Kivutha Kibwana, Wanjala and Mutava Musyimi, who chaired the NCKK at that time (Okubasu 2019).

The Influence of The Circle on Jalango's Theological Persuasion

Rev. Canon Mary Jalango observed that capitalism and its structures predominantly benefit men, echoing a sentiment prevalent in ongoing discourse. In Kenya and across Africa, societal norms often marginalise women, undermining their competence and relegating them to the sidelines. Despite encountering resistance from her own community and facing widespread societal biases, Jalango exhibited remarkable courage and determination. She defied the odds and ascended to the highest levels of society, showcasing her resilience and ability to overcome barriers. Her highest mission in the US was becoming a prayer warrior for President Barack Obama (see images):



A poem in honor of The Rev. Canon Mary Jalango

Ooh daughter of Siaya Soil
Great mama and true measuring rod
Ooh daughter of Kenyan soil
Great mama and true measuring rod
Ooh daughter of African soil
Great mama and true measuring rod
From a village girl to international finger
Great mama and true measuring rod
To you the sky was the limit
Great mama and true measuring rod
You are a woman; you are chosen
Great mama and measuring rod
You are a daughter, wife and a mother
Great mama and measuring rod
Above all you are God's loving daughter
Great mama and a measuring rod
You are a force to reckon everywhere.
Great mama and a measuring rod
Yes, TRUE measuring rod

Conclusion

Rev. Canon Mary Auma Owuor Jalango is celebrated in this chapter for her significant contributions to both the church and society. As one of the founding members of the Circle, she played a pivotal role in the Circle's journey to Ghana in 1989, a milestone documented by scholars such as Kanyoro and Oduyoye (1990). During her time in Geneva, Jalango engaged in numerous discussions aimed at organising women to address the challenges faced by African women, particularly in Zurich. Her life story, achievements and educational background have been extensively documented, highlighting her prowess as a teacher, fundraiser, project initiator, leader and preacher. From humble beginnings as a village girl, Jalango's journey has seen her rise to prominence as an international leader, preacher and educator. She is revered as a powerful intercessor with connections even to President Barrack Obama. Despite her global travels, Mary's heart remains rooted in Kenya, her homeland and the beloved Siaya County. She embodies the spirit of women's empowerment and societal transformation, a true daughter of Kenyan soil who has left an indelible mark on the world stage. This article serves as a tribute to her remarkable achievements and her invaluable role as one of the founding matriarchs of the Circle.

Bibliography

- Kanyoro, M.R.A., and Oduyoye, M.A. (eds.) *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians, Trinity College, Legon-Accra, September 24–October 2, 1989*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990.
- Okubasu, D. “Supreme Court Judges Who Kivutha Kibwana Taught Law.” *Kenyans.co.ke*, March 30, 2019. Accessed March 10, 2022. <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/38357-supreme-court-judges-who-gov-kivutha-kibwana-taught-law>.

Chapter 15

OVERCOMING CULTURAL BARRIERS: A TRIBUTE TO ALINA MAENTE MACHEM

Merrishia Singh-Naicker

Introduction

Alina Maente Machema was born and raised in Lesotho. She was among the 70 women who gathered in Legon, Ghana in 1989 for the official launch of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth referred to as the Circle). Machema, who has since passed away, is fondly referred to as one of the matriarchs of the Circle. At the inaugural gathering of the Circle, Machema presented a significant paper that underscored her theological insights and advocacy for justice. Despite the limited biographical information available about her, this chapter seeks to recognise and affirm Machema's presence and role within the Circle—particularly as one of the 70 founding members. Through an examination of her presentation, the chapter delves into Machema's perspectives, pursuits, praises and passionate pleas, illuminating her contributions to African Women's Theology and social justice. The chapter concludes with a poem that honours Machema's life and her active engagement in challenging and overcoming cultural barriers. It is not known when and where Machema was born or educated, thus the focus of this critical paper she contributed to the Circle inauguration and interview by a theologian from Lesotho, Prof. Leshota.

Overcoming Cultural Barriers: 'Daughters of Africa Arise'

Machema was affiliated with one of the evangelical churches in her country, Lesotho (FamilySearch 2019). Together with Aletta Mandoro, another member of the Circle who hails from Lesotho, Machema travelled to Ghana to participate in the Circle's official launch (Leshota 2022). Despite the scarcity of biographical information, Machema's paper, 'Jumping Culture's Fences,' presented at this inaugural gathering, offers profound insights into her theological perspective. I examine Machema's theological stance through the lens of her perspective, pursuit, praises and passionate plea. Her theological contributions in this one

paper she contributed during the Circle inauguration are significant given the context in which she articulated them. Her participation in the Circle's launch highlights her commitment to addressing the intersection of gender, culture and theology. 'Jumping Culture's Fences' serves as a critical text that not only reflects her personal experiences and challenges but also resonates with broader themes in liberation theology and feminist theology. Machema's work underscores the necessity of dismantling cultural barriers that perpetuate gender inequality and injustice, thereby advocating for a theology that is both contextually relevant and transformative. This analysis seeks to elucidate the core aspects of her theological approach, demonstrating how Machema's insights continue to influence contemporary discourse within African Women's Theology.

A theological perspective that resonates with Machema's paper is found in *African Women's Theologies, Spirituality and Healing: Theological Perspectives from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* (2019). Here Oduyoye expounds Elsa Támez's concept of "spirituality and resistance."

This resonates deeply with Machema's assertions regarding the struggles of African women against oppressive cultural practices, highlighting unequal power dynamics and the silencing of the voices of women. Machema (1989) addresses the adverse effects of cultural conditioning and the victimisation of women, including issues like sex tourism in Lesotho. Founding Circle member Mercy Oduyoye links these injustices to harmful traditional practices and violence against women (Oduyoye 2019). Machema's theological approach begins with the experiences of oppression, akin to liberation theology, which critiques theologies and cultures legitimising injustices perpetrated against women and all subjugated people (Oduyoye 2019). Machema draws parallels between the experiences of African women and Jewish women in Jesus' time, emphasising Jesus' feminist stance. She asserts that Jesus does not support culturally conditioned texts that oppress women, portraying Jesus as a liberator who challenges patriarchal norms (Machema 1989).

Pursuit: Jumping Culture's Fences

Machema's pursuit involves liberating herself and others from cultural constraints that undermine human dignity. She criticises the marginalisation of women's ideas and voices, a pursuit profoundly resonant with many African women, including the author's personal experiences within the Reformed Church in Africa (Reformed Family Forum 2017). Machema's boldness in 'Jumping Cultural Fences' is a call to action for all who feel confined by oppressive cultural and religious practices. She identifies Jesus as a feminist who rejected patriarchal biases, advocating for the reinterpretation of scriptures to support gender equality (Machema 1989). This view is commensurate with the view of the founding mother of the Circle who encourages a deconstruction of patriarchal understandings and a redefinition of Jesus in ways that affirm women's dignity (Oduyoye 2019). Machema's vision of liberation through Jesus underscores the necessity for African women to transcend

and dismantle life-destroying cultural practices. This is symbolised in the tearing of the temple curtain at Jesus' death, signifying the breaking of barriers to divine access and just relationships (ESV Bible 2016).

Praise: Affirmation and Hope

Machema's paper exemplifies a nuanced interplay of gratitude and critical reflection, embodying what Palm terms 'hope against hope' (Palm 2021). Her expression of gratitude acknowledges the strides made within ecclesiastical settings that have granted women increased freedom in worship. This recognition is significant as it highlights the incremental yet meaningful changes within traditionally patriarchal religious institutions. Machema's acknowledgement of these advancements serves not only as an affirmation of progress but also as an encouragement for continued efforts toward gender equality. Simultaneously, Machema celebrates the indispensable roles that women occupy in familial, communal and religious spheres. By doing so, she underscores the essential contributions of women to societal and ecclesiastical well-being. Her reflections affirm the intrinsic value of women's work and presence, countering the historical marginalisation and underappreciation of their roles. This aspect of her paper reinforces the importance of visibility and recognition for women within theological discourse and religious practice. However, Machema's gratitude is intricately woven with a lament for the persistent challenges that women face. This duality—celebrating progress while mourning ongoing injustices—embodies a profound theological stance. It reflects an understanding that, while progress has been made, the journey toward full equality and liberation is far from complete. Machema's ability to hold both gratitude and lament in tension resonates with Palm's (2021) concept of 'hope against hope,' which emphasises maintaining optimism and perseverance in the face of enduring struggles. This balanced perspective is crucial in theological discourse as it prevents complacency while fostering resilient hope. By acknowledging both achievements and ongoing challenges, Machema's paper calls for a sustained commitment to advocacy and reform. It encourages a posture of thankfulness for progress made, coupled with a relentless pursuit of justice for those who continue to suffer. This approach not only honours the efforts of past and present women theologians but also galvanises future generations to continue the work of theological and social transformation.

Passionate Plea: All African Women Arise and Protect Your Human Dignity

Machema's passionate plea for African women to rise and protect their dignity is a significant contribution to feminist theology, particularly within the African context. This call aligns with Mercy Amba Oduyoye's observations about the precarious balance between life and death that many African women navigate daily, underscoring the urgency for dignity and freedom (Oduyoye 2019).

Machema's theological framework emphasises the intrinsic worth and equality of all individuals, rooted in the belief that all are created in the image of God. This theological stance is foundational to her advocacy for women's dignity and liberation. Machema's feminist theology is deeply rooted in the lived experiences of African women, making it a form of liberation theology that starts from the context of the oppressed. Her plea for women to articulate their experiences and challenge oppression is a call to praxis—an active engagement in transforming unjust structures. This approach resonates with the broader objectives of liberation theology, which seeks to address and dismantle systems of oppression through critical reflection and action.

By urging women to reclaim their worth and dignity, Machema challenges both cultural and ecclesiastical norms that have historically marginalised women. Her insistence that women write and speak their own stories is a powerful act of reclaiming agency and voice. This call to narrative agency is crucial in feminist theology as it counters the silencing and erasure of women's experiences in theological and cultural narratives. Moreover, Machema's reference to Jesus' feminist orientation is a strategic theological move that reinterprets traditional Christian texts and doctrines to support gender equality. By depicting Jesus as a feminist, she highlights his counter-cultural actions and teachings that affirmed the dignity and worth of women. This reimagining of Jesus serves as a model for contemporary theological reflection and practice, encouraging a re-evaluation of scripture and tradition through a lens of gender justice. Machema's advocacy for a theology that honours women's dignity is not merely theoretical but demands tangible changes in how theology is practised and lived.

Her passionate plea extends beyond individual empowerment to a communal and systemic transformation, calling for an end to oppressive practices and the establishment of equitable relationships. This vision of a just and dignified existence for all people, particularly women, reflects a holistic understanding of salvation that encompasses social, cultural and spiritual liberation. Machema's passionate plea is a robust theological articulation that integrates feminist principles with the lived realities of African women. It challenges both the church and society to recognise and uphold the dignity of women, advocating for a transformative approach to theology that is both liberating and inclusive. Through her work, Machema contributes to a dynamic and evolving discourse on feminist theology, offering valuable insights and strategies for achieving justice and equality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I honour and celebrate the life and contribution of Alina Maente Machema with the following poem:

From Fences to Freedom

By Merrishia Singh-Naicker

From the Mountain Kingdom in the sky
To joining the great cloud of witnesses
We honour you
Re a ho hlompha
Locked up in boxes
To jumping culture's fences!
Fences of violence and hurt
Dignity destroying fences
How did you do it?
How high did you have to jump?
What did it cost you?
It costed Jesus too
Feminist on the cross
The veil tore in two
Freedom!
And fences you tore to be silent no more
Freedom!
From being locked up by culture and customs
To spreading your wings and flying
Not only jumping but flying
Flying over cultures fences
Flying to witness the birth of the Circle
The Circle that now grows
With Colour and Beauty
Flourishing and thriving
Inside and outside
Under and over
Through and through
The fences!
We thank you
Re a leboha
Mme Alina Maente Machema

Bibliography

- Fabella, V. and Oduyoye, M. 1988. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*. Orbis Books: USA
- FamilySearch. "Kereke ea Evangelic Lesotho, Lidocaine Tsa, 1828–2005." Database with images, 2019. <http://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPZ7N>.

- Machema, A. "Jumping Cultural Fences." In *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, 101–113. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1989.
- Leshota, P. WhatsApp conversation with author (Merrishia Naicker-Singh), 2 February 2022.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. *African Women's Theologies, Spirituality and Healing: Theological Perspectives from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*. New York: Paulist Press, 2019.
- Palm, S. "Stories of Hope? Sustaining Hope in COVID-19 Times of Despair and Anxiety." In *A Time Like No Other: Covid-19 in Women's Voices*, edited by N. Hadebe, D. Gennrich, S. Rakoczy, and N. Tom, 35–50. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 2021.
- Reformed Family Forum. "Reformed Church in Africa." 2017. <http://rff.christian.co.za/the-reformed-church-in-africa-rca/>.

Chapter 16

MARTHA MUKANGARA/MUKANSARA: HIDDEN BUT NOT FORGOTTEN A CREATIVE PIECE

Yvonne Winfildah Takawira-Matwaya

Martha Munsakara?

Realising you could be Martha Mukangara

We are searching; When the talk is about The Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle)

The beginning: Talitha Qumi 1989 it was

It was the time when the South met the West

Together with the East, North and Central

As we remember and retell of great women and their ideas

Sankofa 2024 we will reunite

Where are you now Martha Mukansara?

Realising you could be Martha Mukangara

We are searching; you are hidden but not forgotten

Misspelt your name could have been,

Yet your name appears among the matriarchal African women theologians

The country Zimbabwe identified you its representative

The small seed planted in 1989,

Bloomed to become the Zimbabwean Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

Hail to you our Zimbabwean matriarch!

Where are you now matriarch Martha Munsakara?

Realising you could be Martha Mukangara

We are searching; you are hidden but not forgotten.

Well versed in women's involvement in the Church

You feature as a member in United Methodist at Zimbabwe Annual Conferences, Christian Education, Ecumenical relations,

Ministry to women, Stewardship,

Second woman to be ordained deacon in 1982 and elder in 1984,

African Church Growth and Development Board 1984

You chaired the worship committee in 1995,

You sat on the committee on investigations,
You were indeed participating in theological issues,
Where are you now matriarch Martha Munsakara?
Realising you could be Martha Mukangara
We are searching; you are hidden but not forgotten.

Studied at Africa University in 1992,
Bethany University 2004, Bachelor of Arts
Gammon Theological Seminary 2007, Master of Divinity
Atlanta Interdenominational Theological Center 2011, Doctor of Ministry
You left Zimbabwe and went to the United States of America
Where are you now matriarch Martha Munsakara?
Realising you could be Martha Mukangara
We are searching; you are hidden but not forgotten.

How you connected and participated in the launching of the Circle in Ghana in
1989,
Remains a wonder, we need the foundational wisdom that led you,
As we approach Sankofa 2024, your presence is felt albeit vague,
Where are you now our matriarch you are hidden but not forgotten.
We honour you!

Chapter 17

ESME AKOSUA SIRIBOE: WOMAN/GIRL-CHILD EMPOWERMENT ADVOCATE

Sylvia Owusu-Ansah

Introduction

In this account of one the pioneering member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth, the Circle, I present the life and legacy of the late Esme Akosua Praah Siriboe, a pioneering figure whose profound contributions to education and social advocacy have left an indelible mark on Ghanaian society. Born into a family deeply committed to principles of service and empowerment, Esme's journey as an educationist and women's advocate serves as a testament to the transformative power of dedication and compassion. Despite the scarcity of information surrounding her life, we honour Esme's legacy with a heartfelt poem, paying tribute to her enduring impact and the values she embodied. Through an exploration of her upbringing, educational pursuits and influential roles in various organisations, we uncover the rich tapestry of Esme's life, celebrating her as a beacon of hope, resilience and empowerment. As we reflect on her remarkable journey, we glean valuable insights and lessons that resonate with the core ethos of the Circle, inspiring us to continue the pursuit of justice, equality and dignity for all.

Background

The late Esme Akosua Praah Siriboe was born in 1926 to the late Samuel Oppon Gaisie and Jane Euphemina Gaisie. Samuel was born on 2 October 1894 and Jane was born on 20 September 1901. Siriboe had 14 siblings (MyHeritage 2022). Among them were Eric JKA Gaisie and Joseph Richmond. The late Esme Siriboe was an educationist. She established the Morning Star International School, a Christian educational institution in Accra in 1965. The school takes care of early childhood learning till high school. Siriboe completed her elementary and secondary training in Saltpond, Juaso and Kumasi after which she had the opportunity to attend the then prestigious Achimota School in Accra for her Advanced Level or pre-college

training. She was further trained at the London University Institute of Education in the UK and in Cornell University's Institute of Child Psychology in New York, USA (Sharif 2012).

Siriboe pursued further studies in Christian Education at the Ghana Child Evangelism Institute and John Haggai Christian Institute in Singapore. As an Educationist and Social worker, she has impacted the lives of many, especially as a women empowerment and girl-child education advocate. Her ministry and influence were strongly felt in organisations like Osu Children's home, Ghana Girls' Guide Association, Ghana Bible Society and World Vision International (Sharif 2012). As an attendee of the inaugural gathering of the Circle, it is widely understood that Siriboe embraced the fundamental principles and ethos underlying the Circle's vision and ardently pursued its objectives. The examination of the accomplishments of the Siriboe offers valuable insights and lessons for reflection.

Great Development, Great Vision and Great Legacy—A poem in Honor of Madam Esme Akosua Siriboe

Mother Earth, Mother Africa, Mother Ghana
 What a Great Woman!
 An Exemplary Mother, A Visioneer.
 A multi-breasted nurturer:
 Bread for the Hungry,
 Water for the thirsty,
 Cloth for the Naked.
 A shelter, an anchor,
 the shades of a multi-branched tree.
 From the great soils of Mother Ghana,
 From the fertile Rain Forest Area of Saltpond;
 In Juaso, the Central Region.
 and Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.
 A great woman evolved.
 You harnessed the training you acquired
 from three great cities of Ghana:
 Juaso, Saltpond and Kumasi.
 You developed with great resilience,
 enthusiasm and determination,
 marks of an achiever.
 Being a woman, a mother and a wife in Africa
 was not to you a deterrent, a disadvantage,
 nor a barrier impossible to cross,
 but rather enough motivation for the course you took in life.
 An advocate of girl-child education,
 A benevolent giver,

Putting smiles on the faces of many,
Especially, the orphans and the needy.
Raising the outcasts from the soil and
placing them on a pedestal,
Your great works do follow you,
and are forever remembered.

You are gone to your maker
But you live on in the hearts of many.
Ever Present in the Lives you touched,
The mouths you fed,
The children you raised,
The people you clothed,
And in the many organisations
you sponsored.

Oh, what a legacy!

(Contribution by: Beatrice-Joy Owusu-Ansah)

You were the embodiment of hope and love.
Your desire to feed generations with knowledge
And to empower the girl-child,
Led you to establish the Morning Star school in 1965,
A pioneer in quality primary education.
You founded Morning Star on Christian principles of loyalty,
honesty, respect, hope, justice and courage.
You provided the requisite environment
for sound holistic learning and
development of brilliant young minds.
Like a beacon of light shining in the night,
The impact of this prestigious institution
is seen and felt from miles away.

Madam Siriboe, your pride, the Morning Star,
has made great strides in equipping the future leaders of Ghana
with the knowledge, skills, values,
and attitudes needed for nation-building.
You can rest knowing that the little ones you so cherished,
like beautiful tender flowers, are nurtured
in the garden of hope you created.

Oh, what a legacy!

You were a true philanthropist.

This is evident in how you passionately supported
the physically and mentally challenged,
And the less privileged in society.

In pursuit of your vision,
You gave to Christian institutions, orphanages and NGOs.

The seeds you graciously sowed
have provided fruits for multitudes.
Oh, what a legacy.
(Contribution by Esther Tabiri Owusu-Ansah)
O nurturing hand, mother mine
living so tirelessly- begrudging none
I watch in awe as your tender sprouts
Grow in your care and the morning sun
O comforting smile, mother mine
A cheerful beam to light my way
Even in the darkest night
Shining with hope and the promise of daylight
O guiding feet, mother mine
You walk the mile and bid us follow
The embodiment of your beliefs
Never leaving your words hollow
O teaching lips, mother mine
From which resounding wisdom flows
The timeless echo of your beliefs
Fills our minds and floods our souls
O loving heart, mother mine
You built a home of togetherness
You built a community of excellence
You built a future that's limitless
Oh, what a legacy.

Bibliography

- MyHeritage. "Esme Siriboe—Historical Records and Family Trees." *MyHeritage.com*, February 14, 2022. https://www.myheritage.com/names/esme_siriboe
- Sharif, R.Y. "The Founder of the School—Late Mrs. Esme Siriboe." *Facebook*, February 9, 2012. https://web.facebook.com/notes/morning-star-school-alumni/the-founder-of-the-school-late-mrs-esme-praah-siriboe/10150545101121625/?_rdc=1&_rdr

Chapter 18

BLESSED IS TITILAYO MARY FIBIYI: TRACING YOUR FOOTSTEPS THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEATH (POEM)

Musa W. Dube

Blessed!
Blessed is Titilayo Maru Fibiya of Nigeria!
Blessed is she that comes in the name of the God!
Blessed are her feet as she comes down the mountain,
Blessed is she who participated in the Circle inauguration!
Blessed are the valleys' that she travails upon
For she fills up every valley
And she levels every road,
Blessed is Titilayo Fibiya!

Blessed is she!
For the hand of God brought her
To a valley full of dry bones. Very dry bones
And the voice of God said unto her,
Mortal woman, Can these bones live?
She said "only you know, oh God!"

Blessed is she!
Blessed is she, for the word of God came upon her,
And said, "prophesy to these bones!"
Say to these dry bones "hear the word of God
Hear the word of God oh African women,
Blessed are you when you hear the word of God,
Your dry bones will come to live!

Blessed is she who hears!
This is what the Sovereign God says,
I will make breath enter you; and you will come to live,
I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you,
I will cover you with skin,

I will put breath in you, and you will come to live,
Then you will know that I am the Lord

Blessed is she!

Blessed is Titilayo Mary Fibiye

When for she passed through the Castle of no Return
She walked through the valley of dry bones over and over,
Then she began to prophesy as the Spirit of God commanded her
Blessed is she for she proclaimed life,
In the Valley of Death

Blessed is she!

Blessed is Titilayo Fibiye

For she called out saying,

Hear ye bleeding African women,

For the Lord has seen your decades of bleeding

Stretch out, reach out and touch the garment of Jesus,

Talitha Cumi! Rise from the valleys of death

Blessed is she,

For as she prophesied, she begun to hear a sound,

There was a noise, a rattling sound and the bones came together,

Bone to bone... and until they all stood up. Alive

It was an army of 70 African women,

Standing in Legon, Ghana

1989!

Blessed is she!

Blessed is Titilayo Fibiye

For she heard and she prophesied

Blessed are the dry dead bones

That heard the word of God,

Blessed is the Circle of Concerned

African Women

Blessed!

Chapter 19

HELENA OBU AND HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE CIRCLE (POEM)

Benedicta Opoku Mensah

Little is known about the life of Helena Obu, a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. To honour her memory and participation, I have written a poem:

Helena Obu, a beacon bright, in '89, she joined the fight. For women's place in ministry's fold, she paved the way, courageous and bold.

Her selfless deeds, her advocacy, for women's rights and ministry, Could not go unnoticed, we declare, 'She's a proud mother, beyond compare.'

Maame Obu, your impact profound, In theology and ministry, you're renowned. Your presence at the Circle's dawn, brought countless women to carry on.

When women's liberation needed voice, you stood tall, made the choice, to break tradition's oppressive chains, and let women's ministry shine again.

You exemplify Mathew's decree, "Go forth, teach all," for all to see, that women, too, can spread the word, their voices heard, their message heard.

Mo ne yo! Well done, indeed! You are our Deborah, in word and deed. Your legacy lives on, bright and clear, a guiding light, for all to cheer.

Chapter 20

VICTORIA BREW RIVERSON: A CIRCLE PIONEER (A POEM)

Etoile L. Ayorkor Ajavon-Djanie

In a little garden, tended with care, Stood a gardener, gentle and fair. Amongst the blooms, a baby's cry, Victoria Gardiner, under azure sky.

Born on a Monday, May's twenty-fourth, A heavenly gift, of great import. Fifth of seven, in a sibling band, destined to tread a special strand.

Her education, a path unfurled, in nursing's realm, she found her world. In '61, beneath the sun's bright gleam, Brew Riverson came, like a radiant dream.

Their souls connected, in a divine dance, Love for God, in every glance. From midwifery to ministry's call, Fellowship, and evangelism, standing tall.

Then '89, a pivotal year, seventy women, hearts full of cheer. Victoria Brew Riverson, amongst the mix, as labour pains heralded a new matrix.

Seventy souls, in labour's throes, Midwife Riverson, the delivery rose. In that moment, history was spun, The Circle of Women Theologians begun

Chapter 21

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS – A PRAYER POEM IN HONOUR OF ANGELICA LATSE

Georgina Kwanima Boateng

Whispers in the dawn
Praise be to God
The Lord of all creation
Who has arranged times and seasons
Who has given everything its place
Including the sun, moon and stars
And makes everything shine in its time all year round
To maintain the perfection of creation
If this becomes the turning point in my life
I will be most grateful to God
If this becomes the Epoch moment in my life
I should lift up a cry of joy for the blessed generations to follow

Lord I may be only the wife of someone
Or maybe only the mother of someone
But if I can be more than I am because of this moment
If I can relate to so many more because of this action
Then let this moment and this time be
For I was made for such a time as this

Made for such a time as this
Lord I ask that you will help me to rise in courage
To face the objects that cause barriers with strength
To raze through limitations without fear
To make this moment count in history

Lord even if my past and future remains unknown
Let my present shake the foundations of history
Let my present centre the once marginalized
Let my present bring hope to future generations
For I was made for such a time as this

Made for such a time as this
May I never keep silent until the moment's passed,
May I ever rise to the call to be liberator-deliverer,
May I become a symbol of hope for the persecuted,
May I never stand down, when I must stand up!

Made for such a moment
Let me recognize , Lord let me affirm
The importance of community
Knowing that I cannot fly
Fly with one wing

Let me recognize the joy in community
Let me affirm the strength in community
Let me reap the benefit of community
As we strive together to create in the world
A place for everyone, everywhere, in every time.

Chapter 22

CLOSING THE DIVIDE: TALE OF A SAMARITAN WOMAN MEG UMEAGUDOSU EKO

A Poem in honour of Meg Umeagudosu Eko

Florence Egbeyale

Amidst the scorching blaze of day's cruel light,
I stirred from slumber, into morning's sight,
To face the toils that mark my fate's cruel dance,
Bearing burdens of life's relentless advance.

The sun, a fiery brand upon my skin,
As I, with jar in hand, embark to win,
Against a world with divisions so stark,
Where difference thrives and prejudice marks.

While others tread in dawn's gentle embrace,
I trudge alone, a stranger in this space,
My quest for sustenance met with despair,
In a realm where mercy seems rare.

Born into a world of segregation's grip,
Where patriarchal norms my path doth clip,
And as a woman, scorn is my reward,
In a land where silence is my sword.

Yet amidst the sorrow, a glimmer of light,
A promise of peace, shining ever bright,
From the lips of a Jewish man I met,
Who bridged the gap of divide and set.

He spoke of living water, pure and free,
A Messiah's grace for all to see,
No longer bound by prejudice's chains,
In a world where unity reigns.

Now is the time to spread the word,
of a Saviour whose love knows no bound,
Who breaks down barriers, heals the soul,
And makes the broken-hearted whole.

In this new world, there is no divide,
no Greek nor Jew, no slave nor bride,
for in the eyes of the Divine we stand,
As equals, united, hand in hand.

Let empathy and love guide our way,
As we embrace the dawn of a brand-new day,
For in the freedom of God's loving grace,
We find unity in every place.

Chapter 23

A PRAYER POEM IN HONOUR OF EBELE EKO HEAR THE PRAYER OF THIS WOMAN, OH LORD

Ruth Oluwakemi Oke

In Ghana's land, I, Ebele Eko, do stand,
A woman, yes, by God's gentle hand.
Emotions swirl within this heart of mine,
Weakness, and strength in a delicate line.

Strong as the wind, yet soft as the shade,
This duality in me, by design, was laid.
A will of iron, yet nurturing's embrace,
In small gestures, my soul finds its grace.

Affection sought in infinitesimal form,
Care, thoughtfulness, my spirit does warm.
Support and applause, in humble array,
These simple joys brighten my day.

Oh, if only abundance would surround,
Upon the mountain peaks, I'd be found.
For in the smallest, most tender deed,
Lies the power to make my spirit freed.

Yet, understanding seems far away,
Even the closest can lead me astray.
It's not in riches or worldly gold,
But in love's small gestures my heart's told.

Lord, who will see beyond the veil,
To provide the love that shall never fail?
Grant men the wisdom to comprehend,
the worth of these gifts, to me they send.

In care and kindness, let hearts unite,
To ease my burdens, in love's pure light.
Grant me, O Lord, this humble plea,
To find contentment, to rest in thee.

Amen, let it be so, let it be known,
That in these small gifts, my heart is shown.
Grant me discernment, O Lord above,
To seek the love that is rooted in love.

Chapter 24

PIKINI MAWIKI: AN UNTOLD STORY (POEM)

Véronique Kavuo Kahindo

Are We Made of the Same Flesh?

In honour of the woman whose writings remain veiled,
Penned by a woman whose callings linger unhailed:

Matriarch Pikini Mawika, pioneer among Congolese women theologians,
Leading the sisters, a matriarch revered in Congolese and African dominions.
Your sisters champion your divine call, shared from the Lord's own hand,
Yet some men, entrenched, still shun women from the pastoral land.

Do we, beneath the skin, share the same essence deep within?
You, Matriarch Pikini Mawika, answering the divine call's sweet din,
In the halls of theological study, amidst men's skeptical gaze,
You forged ahead, undaunted, amid their silent disarrays.

Fearless, through your studies, with steadfast conviction you tread,
Confident, competent, in the path where your calling led.
Upon graduation, surely welcomed into ministry's embrace,
Your calibre sought after in each sacred churchly space.

Did your fellow sisters hail your entry with jubilant cheer?
Or were your strides met by the hesitant whispers of male peers?
Do we, under this skin, share the same heart beating within?

Another query, Matriarch Pikini Mawika, where rest your penned words?
Two months I searched, but silence in the bookshelves stirred.
Have you not penned a single line, nor graced the digital scroll?
Even your dissertation, online, found not a single knoll.

Why did you not etch your voice upon the parchment's sheet?
Why does Congolese literature your name not greet?
Do we, beneath this skin, share the same essence deep within?

Pikini Mawika, theologian from the Eastern DRC's distant sphere,
Unheralded, silent amidst the Baptist Community's ancient cheer.
While strong presses abound,
The ink of your sisters seldom spills,
Their voices muted, their pens silent, amidst societal ills.
Do we, beneath this flesh, share the same spirit's breath?
Yet still, beneath this skin, we're made of the same flesh.
Unhailed.

Chapter 25

SŒUR TUNDU-KYALU GERTRUDE: PILLAR OF TRADITION (POEM)

MBITA Martine Paule épse Monesse

Oh, steadfast guardian of our ways,
Through time's expanse, you light our days.
From ancient epochs to present dawn,
your wisdom's mantle we tread upon.
Your years, a testament to grace,
Keeper of our heritage's embrace.

With love that spans from kin to kin,
your legacy, where life begins.
Teach us, guide us, light our path,
for in your wisdom, we find our craft.
Symbol of strength, unwavering still,
Shaper of destinies, by force of will.

To you, our heartfelt thanks we send,
May divine grace your days extend.
Remain among us, ever near,
A beacon of hope, dispelling fear.
In unity, with gratitude we cope,
Blessed by your wisdom, faith and hope.

Prayer:

Eternal God, source of grace, we seek your blessing in this place.
For matriarchs, our cherished guides, in whom your love and wisdom abide.
Grant them strength in their days of rest, may their presence be always blessed.

Guide us, Lord, to honour their name,
Inheritors of their legacy's flame.
Keep them safe, in your loving care.

Chapter 26

JUSTINE MBWITI KAHUNGU: FOREVER THE AFRICAN MATRIARCH (POEM)

Nzitoussou Yon Hélène Pélagie

Ezer, matriarchs of the Circle, you stand tall, in you, the Elder's strength did fall. Like eagles soaring through the sky, you birthed this Circle, far and high. Ezer today, Ezer forevermore.

Ezer, matriarchs of the Circle, your role profound, in you, the Elder's gift was found. With labor's pain, the Circle was born, through trials endured, its truth was sworn. Ezer today, Ezer forevermore.

Ezer, matriarchs of the Circle, your legacy grand, in you, the Elder's power did expand. Through every struggle, the Church arose, Guided by visionaries, wisdom flows. Ezer today, Ezer forevermore.

Ezer, matriarchs of the Circle, your strength endures, in you, the Elder's essence ensures. Through ages past, your spirit thrives, In the Circle's heart, it forever survives. Ezer today, Ezer forevermore.

PART III

SOUTHERN AFRICA FOUNDING MEMBERS

Chapter 27

EVA CHIPENDA: THE PRECIOUS CHARM AND THE WONDERING MATRIARCH OF CALOMBOLOCA

Rebeccah Bartocho

Introduction

Eva De Carvalho Chipenda was born on 15 June 1931 in Icolo e Bengo, Calomboloca village not far from Luanda the capital city of Angola. Her Presbyterian parents were peasant farmers who had 12 children although only three survived into adulthood (Chipenda 1996, 3). Her first teacher was her older brother who was also a pastor; the classes were under a baobab tree. In Calomboloca, Chipenda's village, during her upbringing, the Protestant church and school represented the primary forms of entertainment accessible to her. Chipenda was raised during a period characterised by the stringent doctrines of the Protestant Churches, which openly subjected transgressors of the Ten Commandments to public ridicule, particularly individuals suspected of involvement in acts of adultery or alcohol consumption. Such instances of disgrace proved intolerable for Eva who found herself unable to reconcile herself with the prospect of aspiring to become a church elder, especially given societal norms that deemed such aspirations inappropriate for a young individual, particularly a girl.

At the age of ten, Chipenda's brother, Julio, a Methodist minister, received a promotion to serve in the capital city of Angola, Luanda. Subsequently, she relocated with her brother's family to the urban centre, a transition that heralded manifold opportunities for them (Chipenda 1996, 4). Residing in the city, surrounded by missionaries, facilitated automatic assimilation into an environment characterised by change and civilisation for Chipenda and her kin. Life in Luanda offered a stark contrast to their previous rural existence, imbued with a sense of novelty and excitement. The prevailing emphasis shifted toward education, diverging from the agrarian pursuits typical of village life. Furthermore, inhabiting Luanda necessitated an adaptation to Angolan and Portuguese cultural norms and practices. Chipenda grew up during Portuguese colonisation which did not want Africans to

look like them since the Portuguese condemned African culture as uncivilised. This chapter draws on the book that Chipenda published in 1996.

As she was immersing herself into and becoming conversant with her new urban living and pursuit of education, Chipenda's mother fell ill, necessitating Chipenda's return to the village to serve as her primary caregiver. Tragically, Chipenda's mother succumbed to her illness, plunging the family into profound grief. Following the funeral rites, Chipenda, now 14 years old, resumed her studies in Luanda (Chipenda 1996, 11). However, the year spent tending to her ailing mother had resulted in a significant academic setback. Urban life presented its own challenges for Chipenda and her brother Julio's family, demanding active engagement from each member for survival. Chipenda, recognising the imperative of contributing to the family's well-being, embraced various means of sustenance. Her first-hand encounter with adversity fuelled within her a fervent desire for comprehensive societal transformation and holistic reform.

Chipenda's Life, Education and Contribution to the Society

Chipenda was one of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians pioneers who attended the inauguration of the Circle in 1989 that founded and inaugurated it. Her story is inspirational to women all over the world who are always making tough and sacrificial choices in their lives. Chipenda was concerned about the liberation of both her motherland Angola and women globally. Chipenda studied both her primary and secondary school education in Luanda. However, her schooling was also challenging; the school was far—approximately 50 minutes' walk (Chipenda 1996, 12). Like any other girl, she was expected to wake up early and attend to the domestic chores—cleaning and laundry before heading to school. By the time she got to school, she was already hungry. At school, things were not any better; she felt ashamed because her clothes always smelled of smoke because she had to make a fire to make breakfast for the family before leaving for school using firewood. Her skin was also dry due to the laundry soap she used to wash clothes and there was not always skin cream available to moisturise her skin. She kept hiding her hands from her fellow girls who would laugh at her. Life generally was getting hard, leading her to be unwell both mentally and physically. She ended up performing poorly in school. In fact, she failed her exams and had to repeat some classes. When she finished secondary school, Chipenda got a scholarship to enrol in a Diploma Course in Christian education at the Methodist Institute at St. Amaro in Brazil for three years. She was the first African student to study in the institution. Unfortunately, only the church and not the state recognised the Diploma offered by the institution. Despite having this Diploma, the church did not employ her in ministry.

Chipenda worked through her study programme while studying in Brazil in one of the slums with children and taught Sunday school. After her studies, she returned to Angola and joined her brother's family Julio at Quessau Bible School. Even

after returning home with qualifications, it was difficult for her to get employment because some people at the mission school perceived her as a bad influence on their students. André Cangovi Eurico, Selma Chipenda Dansokho and Jesse N. Mugambi (2023, 53) write as follows:

Upon her return to Angola in 1956, Eva was stationed at the Methodist Mission Station of Quessua in Malange (a city east of the capital Luanda). Her appointment was to work as a Christian Educator and Teacher.

She was passionate about being a teacher and worked hard at it. While teaching at the primary school, Chipenda was approached by the Bible School to work with the wives of the students. She taught in the primary school in the morning and spent time with the wives of the students in the afternoons. Chipenda helped in developing the course for teaching the wives of students and secured funds through start-up loans because she was not eligible for a grant to support the project. The courses taught included sewing, childcare and primary health care which focused on empowering the women. To bring people together and address the challenge of interaction between African-decent and missionary children, Chipenda targeted children and organised Sunday afternoon events for both who participated jointly.

When Chipenda got married, she moved with her husband Jose to Lobito in Angola where he served. To supplement her husband's income, she started baking cookies which she sold. Chipenda later moved to Dondi when her husband got a scholarship to study in New York. She joined her in-laws and she worked again with the wives of the students at Dondi Theological Seminary. In 1962, when Angola was going through an independence crisis, she fled to New York to join her husband. Inspired by how young Brazilian women were outspoken which was a contrast with her own context in Angola, Chipenda enrolled in a one-year secretarial course sponsored by the Board Mission when she joined her husband who was working in New York. She learnt shorthand typing and eventually graduated with a degree. They moved again to Geneva with her family where she enrolled for French Language and sewing classes. When they relocated to Kenya, Chipenda learnt how to drive in order to ease her movement. While in Geneva Switzerland, she joined textile printing and Serigraphy classes. She also studied an interior design correspondence course.

Chipenda was offered a job as an assistant teacher at Riverside Church Kindergarten and Nursery School where her two children, Selma and Gilbert also studied. Though she was struggling to communicate in English, she worked very hard to learn it and her English improved gradually. She taught Sunday school for four years while in New York. She also used her sewing skills to access clientele. They moved to Geneva and then to Nairobi and while in Nairobi, she facilitated dressmaking workshops and worked with the Young Catholic Women Association (YCWA). She initiated a training project in dressmaking and design. Chipenda reached out to the business community for donations while she ordered tables for sewing. They received 12 sewing machines and the project started with 12

women who were from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Some of them were uneducated and could not read or write while others could not communicate in English.

Chipenda did not speak any Swahili and even though language was a barrier, Chipenda managed to build personal relationships with the women; they shared their challenges and leaned on each other. When Tom Mboya¹ was assassinated on 5 July 1969 in Nairobi, sadly Chipenda was instructed to train only women from one ethnic group out of over 42 ethnic groups, something with which she totally disagreed and opted to instead resign from the YCWA. Not too long after her resignation, Chipenda was contacted by Maridadi Fabrics, a women's empowering project which was based in Pumwani, one of the slums in Nairobi. She collaborated with other designers with the aim of initiating other new patterns for the project. The project started with around one hundred women. In December 1973, after a year of trying to organise the project and get it running to empower many women, unfortunately, she had to relocate again to Geneva with her family. The skills and experience built in her a desire to start the same project in Angola after independence.

In 1975, in Geneva, she became the President of the WCC wives' group. Eva applied for a sewing vacancy advertised in the local paper and got the position. However, she resigned after three days because the working environment was not conducive. She however tailored independently in her home. In 1980, together with her husband, they decided to go back home and give back to their own community. They set up a Center of Theological Studies and Culture which offered training and empowering programs for the youth and women, Sunday school teachers, pastors and refresher courses for Church leaders. The center offered programs to all regardless of their religion, race, social background or political affiliation. They moved again to Luanda and she was invited by the Director of Women's Council desk to assist in implementing a woman's training program that resembles the one in Lobito. She worked closely with the director by writing a funding proposal, which was successful. Before long, Chipenda again left Luanda for Nairobi with her husband. She was disappointed because that meant she was no longer able to teach. While in Nairobi at the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Chipenda served as one of the project managers assigned to monitor the construction of the building she had identified as unfinished and raised funds for its completion. She promoted the use of African religious symbols in interior design, which was well-received and implemented. Chipenda is now based in the USA and has advanced dementia, living with her only surviving child, Selma after her husband died in January 2024.

¹ Tom Mboya was a trade unionist who used the trade unions as a space to fight for independence.

Conclusion in the Form of a Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eva Chipenda, a native of Angola, was born and raised in the 1930s as one of 12 siblings. At the age of ten, she relocated to the city to live with an older brother, facilitating her access to education. Notably, she participated in the Circle inauguration event in Ghana in 1989, marking the onset of her engagement in various leadership roles. Despite personal adversity, such as the loss of her son during his teenage years, Chipenda persevered, raising her sole surviving child, a daughter. While scant documentation exists regarding her life journey, her 1996 published work serves as a primary reference for insights into her experiences. Additionally, she is referenced in writings pertaining to her late husband, whose passing occurred in January 2024.

Bibliography

- Cangovi, A.E., Dansokho, S.C. and Mugambi, J.N. "A Living Biography of Angolan Ecumenist José Belo Chipenda." *Journal of African Christian Biography* 8, no. 4 (2023). <https://dacb.org/resources/journal/8-4/8-4-OCT2023-JACB-booklet.pdf>. Accessed April 5, 2024.
- Chipenda, E. *The Visitor: An African Woman's Story of Travel and Discovery*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996.

Chapter 28

‘MOSADI O MOKOKOTLO O SEPHARA’ⁱ: A REFLECTION ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF BRIGALIA BAM

Mantima Thekiso

Introduction

“The first major lesson was about the connections between apartheid and other forms of oppression that I experienced. At the same time, people are struggling against these injustices and each victory, in every corner, matters. Among these struggles, the struggle for gender equality and women’s rights stands out. All over the world, I have friends, sisters and movements that I still connect with and share solidarity with, even as I enjoy post-apartheid South Africa. I, therefore, learnt that one cannot live without others. As human beings, we need that touch, that connection. It is that connection, physical or spiritual, that sustains you. It is also others that give you hope for change” (Bam 2022).

These are the words of Brigalia Ntombemhlophe Bam, born on 21 April 1933. Bam hails from Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, South Africa and is a member of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. In the foregoing quotation, she shares thoughts on what became lessons from her 21 years while in exile. These words also capture the lenses through which she worked and viewed her responsibilities in the quest for gender equality and a just society. It is through her life and work that we will see her commitment to living out the theological principle of interconnectedness. Furthermore, she believes her work goes beyond the individual, to the emancipation of a community through building meaningful connections. Hence, she is described in this biographical chapter, using the Sesotho idiom, as *Mosadi o mokokotlo o sephara*ⁱⁱ; loosely translated, ‘a woman with broad shoulders.’ Her life, ministry and participation in the Circle bring to mind a story of the connection between Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1: 38–56. A story described as one of ‘humility and solidarity’ with other women’s experiences regardless of differences in age or class (King 1994, 208). This chapter draws on the interview I had with Ms Bam in 2022 as I was preparing the notes for this chapter.

Background of upbringing^{giii}

Brigalia Bam’s parents were teachers but her mother was not able to be employed by the government because she was a married black woman. Although this was the case, her mother Mrs Temperance Mazwi Bam did not lack a sense of agency. She became a community healthcare worker and was an active member of a women’s organisation called *Zenzele*, translated, ‘Do it for yourself’ (Bam 2022). An apt expression of how rural women rose up to the occasion of being agents of change rather than succumbing to being confined to the home by virtue of being a woman or a married woman. Though marginalised, rural women’s sense of agency and their being multiskilled became capital for the community they belonged to rather than a deficit, therefore, sharing skills and confidence and inspiring younger women who witnessed this. Much like the relationship between Mary and Martha they extended care and support and connected in solidarity with each other’s experiences as women. This became much of what inspired Brigalia Bam to be involved in women’s work. Bam was close to her late mother and acknowledges that the commitment shown by her mother in serving communities became her inheritance. Another influential person in her life was her grandfather. He affirmed and celebrated much of her achievements, encouraging her in outdoor activities such as horse riding and later learning to drive a motor vehicle (Bam 2022). Though the societal realities of her time were limiting for women and girls, her lived experience at home was different and encouraged her to live outside the confines of gender stereotypes.

Her Educational Training and Work History

Bam is a product of the mission school system, which she highlights was already segregated. Elaine Unterhalter further attests to this in their assessment of the impact apartheid had on the education of women in South Africa. Unterhalter highlights that the school system was already segregated during the missionary era. During apartheid, the system of segregation was further reinforced using laws that guaranteed the black population to receive inferior quality and resourcing of education (Unterhalter 1990, 67). Moreover, Unterhalter highlights that though the system was accepting of both genders, women “were inadequately served by the system both as regards to the quality of education received and the numbers of those privileged to attend (Unterhalter 1990, 69–70).”

This further meant that black women and girls were doubly excluded. This was the reality for many communities in South Africa in which Bam would later work. Bam received her formal educational training in the Eastern Cape. She attended school at the Shaw Bury Methodist Institute and later at the Lovedale Teachers College in South Africa where she qualified as a teacher. It was while she was at Lovedale that she joined the African National Congress in 1952 (Bam 2012, 8). She later qualified as a social worker at the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social

Work in 1973 from the University of Chicago. Although her formal training is in social work, her career spans varied responsibilities. From being a teacher to a social worker, to feminist and gender advocacy, to an ecumenist and a democrat (Unknown 2019). A common strand in these responsibilities is her commitment to the realisation of a just society for all, especially women both in church and society. Bam acknowledges that much of her learning happened during her travelling and connecting with the lived experiences of others.

Her conviction to work towards the liberation of all persons, especially black people and women globally, influenced how she carried out her work responsibilities. Central to her roles was the work of advocating for gender justice and the eradication of all forms of social inequalities, especially those perpetuated by racism. This was moulded by the different inequalities she witnessed in apartheid South Africa. Her resilience further solidified her conviction that it is not enough for one to experience emancipation and hold office without advocating for the emancipation of others. This is evident in the type of work and advocacy she engaged in and the organisations she worked with. After qualifying as a social worker, Bam went on to work for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Natal for nine years (Bam and Sisulu 1995, 21). During these years, she became involved in political activities though in concealed ways (Bam 2012, 8). It is at the YWCA, an ecumenical organisation that she honed her organising skills, working with people and inspiring women and youth. This is also where she appreciated the intersections between faith, culture, the power of organised religion and grew her sensitivity to issues pertaining to women (Bam and Sisulu 1995, 22). It is this role that led her to accept a job at the World Council of Churches (WCC) where her work focused on women and anti-racism initiatives. After struggling to get her passport, which was refused by the South African government, a reality of many black people at the time, Bam resumed work in Geneva at the WCC in 1967. During this role, she became aware of the global nature of patriarchy and the experiences of the poor and excluded across the world (Bam 2012, 10–12).

Having witnessed the injustices of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa, Bam's commitment while in Geneva was not only to combat racism in South Africa but to educate and mobilise support for antiracism across the globe. Her time at the WCC was engaged in this level of activism and advocacy regarding racism, its employees and persons associated with it were banned in South Africa by the apartheid regime and declared *persona non grata*. Though a bitter moment for her as she could not travel home, Bam remarked that the many connections she made and sisterhoods shared in the ecumenical movement, including the sisterhood of the Circle, is what sustained her. From the WCC she moved on to work for the International Union for Food and Allied Workers and established further connections and liberation-minded networks.

Bam was later able to travel back home to South Africa and in 1994, she became the first female General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) until 1997. She went on to be appointed as Chairperson of the

Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). It was during her tenure at the SACC that she encouraged critical dialogue on relations between church and state and was part of the inception and the use of the notion of ‘critical solidarity with the state’ (Unknown 2019, 1). In 1998, Bam became founder and president of the Women’s Development Foundation.

Participation in the formation of the Circle

Bam recalls that it was while at the WCC and serving on the Council at Harvard University that she followed the work of the feminist movement. Mostly produced in the West, she noticed the absence of African feminist voices in this scholarship. At the time, the council was offering an opportunity for a woman to be invited to study and publish, in an area of their choice. She was frustrated that she had no name to recommend from Africa. She began a search for African women’s voices. Her quest for these voices led her to Mercy Oduyoye, the much-talked about Ghanaian feminist, New Testament Scholar and founder of the Circle. Like the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth, her interactions with Oduyoye and later with other African women theologians further fuelled her passion for creating spaces where the experiences of African women were heard. It is their desire to promote and amplify the lived experiences and intellectual contribution of African women theologians that inspired them to work towards the establishment of the Circle. Their link with the WCC helped with the early stages of the formation of the Circle. In 1988, the first meeting was held at the WCC head office in Geneva to strategise around the formation of the Circle (Fiedler & Hofmeyr 2011, 40).

Bam’s publication, *What is Ordination Coming to?*^{iv} became a seminal work in ecumenical spaces, critiquing the exclusion of women in ordained ministry. She recalls in her interview with Elinor Sisulu that she was asked to present lectures in debates on the ordination of women. Bam expresses the exhaustion and frustration experienced as she fought this battle, especially in her church—the Anglican Church (Bam and Sisulu 1995, 23). Though not a trained theologian nor a clergy member, she still believes her theological and social justice journey was a just and necessary course for the sake of younger generations of women to come. She now celebrates the emergence of many young women scholars and women clerics in the ecumenical movement, especially in Africa.

Bam also published on women’s issues in the Church and while serving in the electoral commission, published a book *Democracy: More than Just Elections*.^v This publication further demonstrated her approach to issues of social justice, gender justice, freedom and equality. It is through her dedication that she was recognised by several institutions and is a recipient of honorary doctorates from accredited universities. She has served as Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University as well as of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. She is also a recipient of several prestigious awards for her role in the upliftment of women and contribution to democracy in South Africa. She is a recipient of The National Order of the

Baobab in Silver in 1994 and The Order of Simon of Cyrene in 1998, which is the highest award given to laity in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa for their distinguished service. She has received many other awards including the Shoprite Checkers Women of the Year award in 2011 which she dedicated to her mother (Bam 2022).

Conclusion

Brigalia Bam as pioneer and matriarch of the Circle has spent much of her life in the pursuit of equality. Though not formally trained as a theologian, a decision she acknowledges in hindsight was a missed opportunity, she appreciated the many women she encountered in her journey who shared the vision of telling African women's experiences in the quest for liberation. And as a true African matriarch, Bam has committed her life to the service of others. Through her resilience, she carried many other women with her in this quest. We honour her life and work and thank her for being a woman of broad shoulders—*Mosadi o mokotlo o sephara!*

Notes

- i. A Sesotho idiom translated "A woman with broad shoulders" which is an idiom used to describe a woman of resilience and one who is able to accept great responsibility. This Sesotho idiom is an equivalent of the English idiom describing one to 'have broad shoulders.' For McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms: have broad shoulders. (n.d.) *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*. (2002). Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/have+broad+shoulders>
- ii. Often used to describe matriarchs in the family who have played an important role beyond the home but also their ability to carrying others with for the sake of building community.
- iii. A special word of thanks to Ms. Brigalia Bam for creating time for conversation and sharing on details of her life and upbringing as I was preparing this paper.
- iv. Brigalia Bam, 1971. *What is Ordination Coming To? Report of a Consultation on the Ordination of Women Held in Cartigny, Geneva, Switzerland 21st-26th September 1970*. Ed. by Brigalia Bam
- v. Brigalia Bam, 2015. *Democracy: More Than Just Elections*. Johannesburg: KMM Review Publishing.

Bibliography

- Bam, B. Interview by Mantima Thekiso, 11 April 2022.
- Bam, B.H. "Lessons from Exile." In *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, edited by Lauretta Ngcobo, 8–19. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012.
- Bam, B. and Sisulu, E. "Born into Church." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 25 (1995): 21–25.
- Fiedler, R., and Hofmeyr, J. "The Conception of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians: Is It African or Western?" *Acta Theologica* 31, no. 1 (2011): 39–57.
- King, U. "Reflections on Biblical Texts." In *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, edited by Ursula King, 202–214. New York: Orbis Books, 1994.

- Phiri, I.A. “Major Challenges of African Women Theologians in Theological Education (1989–2008).” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34, no. 2 (2008): 63–81.
- Unknown. “Wits University - Brigalia Bam Citation.” *Wits University Honorary Degree Citations*. <https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/alumni/documents/honorary-degree-citations/Brigalia%20Bam%20citation.docx>. Accessed April 23, 2022.
- Unterhalter, E. “The Impact of Apartheid on Women’s Education in South Africa.” *Review of African Political Economy* 48 (1990): 66–75.

Chapter 29

THE JOURNEY OF ISABEL APAWO PHIRI WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON HER CONTRIBUTION TO AFFIRMING GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

Linda Naicker

Introduction

Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri is one of the most outstanding and influential African womanist theologians of the 21st century. Phiri was Deputy General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia—World Council of Churches (WCC) until 31 December 2022 but has since moved to her home country, Malawi, where she continues to serve in various academic and ecclesial capacities. She was a lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Chancellor College at the University of Malawi, a Professor of African and Womanist Theology and Dean of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Hamlen 2021, 46). Phiri has contributed significantly to many areas in theology and religion; her research endeavours have become authoritative reference material and coursework in the study of gender and religion, HIV and AIDS and African Theology. As a celebrated ecumenical leader and scholar/activist, Phiri has been involved in social and political advocacy in various contexts for the advancement of social cohesion, justice and peace. Correspondingly, Phiri has endured persecution because of her scholarship and activism. This chapter is an exposition of the life and career of Phiri, demonstrating her distinctive contributions with a special focus on her contributions to engendering theological education. Methodologically, the study begins as a literature study where data are obtained from the review and analysis of scholarly sources. The literature study demonstrates that Phiri is one of the most outstanding figures in ecumenical work, advocacy and theological education of our times. In the second half of the study, using autophenomenography, I elucidate the exemplary way in which Professor Phiri approaches theological education and pedagogy.

Methodological Approach

Through the review and analysis of scholarly sources, I explore Phiri's early life, educational achievements, marriage and family, career and activism, as well as her enormous contributions in both academic and ecclesial spaces. Next, I employ autophenomenography as a form of reflection to elucidate Phiri's contribution towards engendering theological education. Autophenomenography is a research practice which is derivative from the more popular research term of 'phenomenology'. Phenomenology is a pragmatic research position which "assumes that people only have access to the world through experience" (Shu 2020, 3).

This experience makes way for the analysis of socially meaningful interpretation (Shu 2020, 3, Wilson 2015, 38). Autophenomenographic research is the reflexive investigation of phenomenal encounters which suggests value for making sense of such phenomena within "creative practice" (Shu 2020, 3).

Through the rigorous and incisive research practice of autophenomenography, in which my experience is explored and examined (Shu 2020, 3), I interpret my encounter with Professor Isabel Phiri in the classroom. Autophenomenography establishes the author as a key informant of their own experience within the research to increase the in-depth nature of the study. Within autophenomenography, the researcher's value judgements become key ingredients in the research. While the method acknowledges the potential for researcher bias, it also establishes a contextual frame of interpretation (Wilson 2015, 38). I was a student of Professor Phiri from 2006–2008 during my undergraduate studies in theology and her postgraduate student from 2009–2011 when I took elective classes she taught during my Bachelor of Honours in Theology and Master of Theology studies. The analysis of my own experience of Phiri's positioning of gender through pedagogy will guide section two.

Early Life

Isabel Apawo Phiri was born on 8 November 1957 to the Chewa, a Bantu people of Central and Southern Africa. Chewa is spread predominantly across the Phiri and Banda clans (Phiri 2007, 23). Born in Zambia where her parents lived for a short while, Phiri returned with her parents to her Motherland, Malawi, when she was six months old. As a matrilineal people, Phiri's ancestral lineage can be traced through her mother, Dorothy Namajengo Kazuwa. Her maternal grandfather, Gideon Kazuwa was an elder at the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in the Nkhoma Synod. Raised in the Presbyterian Church, Phiri recalls that her maternal grandmother, Naphiri Kazuwa was a woman of ardent prayer and prayed early every morning for her children and grandchildren. When Phiri was two years old, her father died tragically in a car accident. Widowed and pregnant with her third daughter at just 24-years old, Phiri's mother, commensurate with the matrilineal society from which she hails, received support from her parents and immediate

family and later married Gershom Migochi. The couple had two more daughters and a son and raised all six children as a family unit. Phiri's father was a teacher by profession and her mother was a nurse and later a secretary for the Reserve Bank in Malawi. The couple placed great emphasis on education and ensured that all their children attended good schools (Hamlen 2021, 46–48).

Education

Phiri attended a Catholic boarding school and focused on Bible Studies. She graduated from Chancellor College in 1981 with a Bachelor of Education in Religious Studies and History degree. She enjoyed the study of African traditional religions and its implications for her own cultural perspectives. Furthermore, such studies were important considering her training to become an educator in Religious Studies in Africa. In 1982, Phiri went to Lancaster University in England where she earned a master's degree in education with a special focus on religious education and New Testament studies. It was at Lancaster that Phiri began to grasp the importance of religious studies at secular universities. Phiri commenced her PhD studies in 1990 at the University of Cape Town with a scholarship from the WCC. Phiri's arrival in South Africa coincided with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the dismantling of apartheid. The social, political and theological landscape in South Africa at the time influenced Phiri's scholarship immensely (Hamlen 2012; Fiedler 2011).

Marriage and Family

Phiri married Maxwell Agabu Phiri on 21 December 1985. Their son, Chisomo Phiri was born in 1988. The couple later adopted two more children, Kuleza Phiri and Cynthia Phiri. The pair both pursued academic careers and enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship. Phiri has one grandchild, Chisomo's daughter, Eliana Isabella Thandeka, born in 2015. Professor Maxwell Phiri teaches Business Administration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. When Phiri left to serve the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland, the couple had to live on different continents. However, they travelled frequently to visit each other (Hamlen 2021).

Career

Upon graduation, Phiri was hired by the Religious Studies Department at Chancellor College in Malawi as a lecturer in the fields of African Theology, New Testament Studies and Religious Education. She also taught concurrently for a year at a Catholic girl's school. Phiri sat on many university committees and boards and was also the secretary for the Theological Society of Malawi from 1984–1986. Phiri has been sitting on the editorial board of the *Journal of Religion in Malawi* since 1987 to date. In addition, she served as moderator for the Bible knowledge

for Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations and chief examiner for Bible Knowledge, Paper One.

John Pobee, an influential Ghanaian New Testament scholar and ecumenical leader was an important figure in Phiri's academic growth and development. At a WCC-sponsored conference held in Malawi, Pobee invited Phiri to join the WCC's Programme on Theological Education as Youth Commissioner, a position she held for six years from 1984–1990. Phiri has since remained connected to the WCC in various capacities over the years (Hamlen 2021).

Pobee also introduced Phiri to Mercy Amba Oduyoye who was the Deputy General Secretary of the WCC from 1987–1993. A pioneering figure in the development of African Women's Theology, Oduyoye founded the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989 (Kanyoro 2002, 18). Phiri attended the launch of the Circle in Ghana in September of 1989 as a representative of the WCC's Programme on Theological Education. This experience inspired Phiri to explore more deeply the intersections of gender, culture and religion in the lives of African women and societies. Wherever Phiri lived, she founded local chapters of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. In total, Phiri founded five local chapters (Hamlen 2021).

Activism

Phiri's scholarship and activism to uplift the lives of women is evident throughout her academic career. While completing her doctoral work, she founded a chapter of the Circle in Cape Town. Upon completion of her PhD, Phiri returned to Chancellor College in Malawi as faculty in 1993. In 1994, Phiri joined the struggle of a group of church women from the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP who were protesting the state of the ordination of women in ministry, violence against women, unequal salaries, lack of involvement in decision-making of the Church and the marginalisation of unmarried women. This met with reprisals from male church leaders and Phiri was asked to leave the Blantyre Synod. Phiri challenged this decision and brought international attention to the situation, resulting in measured reconciliation. In the same year, she founded a Circle chapter in Malawi. At this Circle chapter, students began to share their experiences of harassment and gender-based violence on campus. Phiri addressed the situation directly, along with three other female faculty members, Linda Semu, Flora Nankhuni and Nyovani Madise Chikusa. The situation led to an academic study by the four which revealed widespread rape, harassment, and gender-based violence on campus. The study drew national and international attention and angered many. As a result, Phiri's home and the family car were destroyed. In addition, students threatened to rape Phiri and kill her son. The prolonged effects of this entire incident and the constant persecution were extremely taxing on Phiri and her family. However, in the end, in 1995, Phiri received the annual "Woman of the Year Award."

From a national newspaper in Malawi. She was selected by readers of the newspaper. As a result of Phiri's collaborative efforts, public scrutiny and international pressure forced the University to address the situation of gender-based violence on campus. A Centre for Gender Studies was launched in 1999 to work towards full participation, equality and development of women and men (Hamlen 2021).

On sabbatical at the University of Namibia where she taught African Theology from 1996–1997, Phiri founded a chapter of the Circle in 1996. After a sabbatical, Phiri accepted the position of Associate Professor in Theological Studies at the School of Religion and Culture, University of Durban Westville. It was here that Phiri's academic career gained enormous momentum as she gained recognition as a sterling professor and well-established researcher. Phiri also founded a chapter of the Circle at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Phiri's commitment to African Women's Theology and academic and activist scholarship is evident through her many publications, editorships, public engagements, mentorship and the fact that wherever she was based, she established a chapter of the Circle to uplift women and work towards justice and equality. Phiri was Head of the School of Religion and Theology from 2005–2007 and became Dean in 2012. This is a landmark achievement for African women who continue to be underrepresented as faculty and administrative heads at African universities. Phiri was Director of the Centre for Constructive Theology from 1997–2012. In addition, she was senior editor of the *Journal of Constructive Theology* from 1997–2010 and is Editor Emeritus for the *African Journal of Gender and Religion*.

In 2012, Phiri became Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia, WCC. In 2017 Phiri became Deputy General Secretary. The only other African woman holding this position was Phiri's mentor and founder of the Circle, Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Phiri's work at the WCC undoubtedly mirrors her work in the church and academia (Hamlen 2021, 66). Phiri's work at the WCC includes overseeing the Ecumenical United Nations Office, Ecumenical Water Network, Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy, Food for Life Campaign and the WCC-Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. Phiri's approach in this regard is always inclusive and collaborative, seeking full inclusion for marginalised groups such as LGBTQIA+ people and people from other faiths. In December 2016, Phiri travelled to Israel as part of the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine (EAPPP). Phiri was denied entry into Israel on the grounds that she was an activist for the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions movement (BDS) and sent back to Switzerland. The WCC contested this denial and after two years of legal challenges, the court ruled in Phiri's favour. Not surprisingly, Phiri's work at the WCC has a strong gender justice component.

Curriculum and Advocacy

Phiri's stance regarding the theological curriculum is deeply connected to her commitments, membership and participation in the work of the Circle. As a

member of the Circle, Phiri has worked collaboratively to increase the enrolment of female students in theological studies at the university level. Moreover, she has always been a strong advocate for the increase of female faculty members in higher theological education. Her deep strides in working towards and in many instances achieving the engendering of the theological curriculum at the university level can also be attributed to her commitment to the work of the Circle. Phiri is a strong proponent of the view that engendering the theological curriculum requires collaboration and support of African male theologians in the church and the academy. Through collective participation, Phiri has joined forces with other members of the Circle to advocate for and include African male scholars in the quest to engender the theological curriculum and work together in the community. Phiri strongly believes that it is vital that male and female theologians work together not only towards engendering the theological curriculum but towards liberation from all forms of oppression for all people (Phiri 2008).

In her article entitled, *Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education (1989–2008)*, Phiri (2008) argues that regarding the theological curriculum, gender must become a major concept in theological analysis. In essence, this means that gendered injustices that exist in all spheres of life must be exposed, grappled with and addressed. As a strong advocate for mainstreaming gender in the theological curriculum, Phiri argues that mainstreaming gender in the theological curriculum will necessitate action on three levels. Firstly, there needs to be advocacy for the inclusion of gender issues in all theological disciplines and courses. Secondly, courses on gender should be offered as electives at introductory, intermediate and advanced levels of theological study. Thirdly, an entire programme on gender and religion with a designated chair at the postgraduate level is essential. Significantly, during Phiri's tenure at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, such a chair was created in 2008 (Phiri 2008, 3).

The Classroom

Phiri's classroom was a transformative place where gender issues formed a critical and central part of the syllabus concomitant with her belief that issues of gender should be mainstreamed in the entire theological curriculum. This was evident not only through the coursework she designed and delivered but also in the dynamic way she introduced her students to women and less heard of men in the theological and ecclesial arenas. For example, as her students, we engaged in critical analysis of the fortitude of MaNku, who founded an African Indigenous Church in South Africa. The patriarchal constructions of ecclesial and societal arrangements which resulted in MaNku losing control of the church to her male counterpart formed an important part of our conversations and debates. A pertinent aspect in our discussions was how patriarchal ideology impacted MaNku's role as a church leader. MaNku was only allowed to be the leader if her husband acted as archbishop. Upon the death of her husband, MaNku began to encounter challenges

regarding her leadership.ⁱ Another pertinent example is the life of Tiyo Soga, one of the first African-ordained ministers in South Africa. Ordained in the United Presbyterian Church in 1856, Soga ran a mission station and built a church and a school in South Africa. He was a composer of hymns and prayers and an author and translator of the Bible and other works. As a minister of the Gospel and a black man married to a white woman, we analysed and unpacked the many vulnerabilities Soga embodied, the atrocities and separations of racism and the pervasiveness of white power and privilege in Africa.ⁱⁱ

Phiri's lessons were not only confined to the classroom. As her students, we joined her on many field trips where we observed services in African Initiated Churches where women often played prominent leadership roles. These excursions were personally and theologically transformative for us as we engaged with different and similar beliefs, practices and points of view. These differences and similarities constantly shaped and reshaped our perspectives, enabling us to uphold the principle of inclusivity within diversity. As an African womanist theologian, Phiri accentuated the importance of storytelling and narrative theology in the classroom. Storytelling as an educational tool transformed Phiri's classroom into a lively and energetic space where biblical texts, African proverbs, women's stories of oppression and liberation and African cultural myths were examined, debated and discussed with the aim of promoting human dignity and understanding that dehumanisation of others results in the dehumanisation of self.

Pedagogy

Phiri's demeanour in the classroom was one of grace, poise and confidence. She embodied a strength and professionalism that was captivating. As her students, we felt assured of her nurture and support. This gave my classmates and me the freedom to express ourselves and to be open up and be honest in the moment. Phiri inspired learning and critical thinking by gently nudging us to question our own assumptions about issues and creating a safe space for discussion and debate. In Phiri's classroom, we gained a vast appreciation for human similarities and differences and an awareness of the gravity of human oppression. We were introduced to the remarkable scholarship of many African theologians, both male and female, the likes of John Pobee, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Jesse Mugambe, Tinyiko Maluleke Sam, Ezra Chitando, Musa Dube, Musimbi Kanyoro, Esther Mambo, Nyambura Njoroge and many more African renown theologians. We grappled with many social justice issues from a theological perspective, ranging from HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence, racism, sexism, classism and many more pertinent issues that hinder the full humanity and freedom from all forms of oppression for all peoples. As students, we were given a platform to develop critical cognisance of the presence of patriarchy in our own lives, in the church and the patriarchal oppression of women and subjugated men in the church and society.

Most first-year students in Phiri's class came to the university to study to become pastors or for some other ministerial capacity. Many, myself included, embodied traditional notions about gender which often included male/female gender binaries and the idea that heterosexuality is the only socially acceptable sexual orientation. In Professor Phiri's classroom, stereotypical gender understandings were challenged through coursework and interactions in the classroom. Each student was challenged to engage individually and collectively as agents of change and transformation as we confronted the religious, social and economic oppressions of our time. Something that caught my attention early on in Phiri's classroom was the way in which Professor Phiri really listened to what her students were saying. Each one of us felt valued, validated and respected.

I recall the first graded assignment I produced for Phiri. She allocated me, to my total discontent, 60 percent. After the class, I approached Phiri asking her how I could improve my mark in the future. She replied,

'You presented the insights of many scholars very well but I did not once hear your voice in the entire paper. Where is your voice, what do you think, what are your conclusions? That is what is missing in your paper.'

At that point, during my first year of formal theological education, I honestly did not realise my voice was relevant. My ecclesial background groomed me to believe that women should remain silent on pertinent theological matters and that the voices of those in leadership (all of whom were men in my context) should be valued and validated above my own insights. It was a lightbulb moment for me, the first of many. Through the nurture, inspiration and training of Phiri and many other theologians, I now hold a PhD in Gender and Religion and I am a faculty member at an institution for higher learning.

Conclusion

Phiri's commitment to ecumenism, African Women's Theology and African Theology has carved her a place in history as one of the most accomplished and productive theologians of our times. Her personal journey and work as a scholar/activist offer a beacon of hope to African women and men in the church and academy. Her contribution to the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is invaluable. This is evidenced by the many chapters she instituted wherever she lived throughout her academic career and through the mentorship of African women within the Circle, in the academy and at grassroots level. Her work and legacy are anchored on the principles of justice and equality. This is the driving force that motivates her cry for full humanity and freedom from all forms of oppression and dehumanisation for all people, particularly women. Phiri honours and maintains through her scholarship, activism and teaching, the connectedness of humanity, all life and nature.

The Christian faith, particularly as it exists in Africa, meaningful prayer and the renewal of Church and society are important aspects of Phiri's life and scholarship. A strong opponent of the use of coercive power, Phiri decries the weaponising of any form of violence, be it physical, social, economic, or sexual, maintaining that all people are image bearers of God and are deserving of respect and dignity. To that end, Phiri's scholarship activism, and teaching demonstrate that women and men, in both church and society, must work together as co-creators with God, in order to eradicate all disparity and positively impact the world. Phiri's love for Africa and her commitment to present and future generations of thinkers, activists, ministers, lay people and communities inspires a deeper and more meaningful spirituality, social cohesion, peace and justice. As I was in the process of concluding this chapter, I received word that on 24 April 2023, Phiri was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Divinity from the University of Pretoria in recognition of her outstanding contributions to academia and the global church and society.ⁱⁱⁱ

Notes

- i See: Dictionary of African Christian Biography. Nku, Christinah (B) (1894 -1980): St John's Apostolic Faith Mission, South Africa. <https://dacb.org>.
- ii See: Dictionary of African Christian Biography. Soga, Tiyo (E) (1829-1871): Presbyterian South Africa. <https://dacb.org>.
- iii Naicker, L. Telephonic conversation with Professor Isabel Phiri. 11 December 2022.

Bibliography

- Fiedler, R.N. *The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (1989–2007): History and Theology*. PhD diss., University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 2011.
- Hamlen, M. "Isabel Apawo Phiri: Centering the Voices of Women in Africa." In *Challenging Bias Against Women Academics in Religion*, edited by Colleen Hartung, 45–78. Atla Open Press, 2021.
- Kanyoro, M. "Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle." In *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*, edited by [editor's name], 1–23. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002.
- Marriage, S. Review of *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Malawi*, by Isabel Apawo Phiri. *Studies in World Christianity* 5, no. 2 (1999): 245–246. <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/swc.1999.5.2.245>. Accessed June 20, 2022.
- Naicker, L. Telephonic conversation with Professor Isabel Phiri, December 11, 2022.
- Phiri, I.A. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: African Books Collective, 2007.
- . "Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education (1989–2008)." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34, no. 2 (2008): 63–81.
- Shu, E. "Extending the (Scientific) Document: Autophenomenography as a Docupoetics of the Natural History Archive." *Axon: Creative Explorations* 10, no. 1 (2020). <https://axonjournal.com.au/issue-vol-10-no-1-may-2020/extending-scientific-document>.
- Wilson, A. "A Guide to Phenomenological Research." *Nursing Standard* 29, no. 34 (2015): 38–43.

Chapter 30

OMEGA BULA'S AFRICAN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE CIRCLE

Mutale Mulenga Kaunda

Introduction

The late Omega Chilufya Makumba Bula was one of the 70 African women who participated in the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians (the Circle) in 1989 in Accra, Ghana. The inception of the Circle stemmed from the vision of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Ghanaian woman who noted the limited representation of African religious women in global ecumenical arenas. Oduyoye proactively engaged African women from various backgrounds, including clergy, laypersons and theologians, urging their involvement in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) during the 1970s. Extensive literature detailing the history of the Circle is readily available through online search engines, articles and book chapters. This brief chapter serves as a biography highlighting the life and economic ecumenical contributions of Omega Bula, a foundational member of the Circle who participated in its inauguration in 1989. Central to the Circle's mission is the promotion of scholarly writings by African women, as well as the publication of their experiences within faith communities and cultural contexts.

This chapter shows Omega Bula's exploration of women's economic ecumenical experiences, as recounted in an interview conducted with her in April 2022. Through the lens of storytelling, Bula's perspective offers insights into the lived realities of African women within the economic and ecumenical spheres. The interview served as a primary source of information for the development of this chapter. Bula's passing on 31 January 2023 while the manuscript was under review, was painful. Employing storytelling as a research methodology underscores its significance as a tool for African women theologians to critique historical narratives that overlook or marginalise women's voices. Through storytelling, women gain agency as they articulate their own experiences, a concept advocated by scholars such as Mercy A. Oduyoye (1995), Isabel A. Phiri, Sarojini Nadar (2005) and Musa W. Dube (2001). Attending Bula's virtual memorial service alongside representatives from global

ecumenical organisations, family and friends allowed for a collective reflection on her legacy and contributions to the field.

Brief Background and Educational Training

Omega Bula, affectionately known as ‘Ma Bula’ within the Zambia Circle chapter, was born in Lusaka, Zambia on 8 October 1948 during the era of British colonial rule. She experienced the transition to Zambian independence from colonial Britain in October 1964 when she was approximately 16 years old. Tragically, Bula lost her mother to asthma at the age of seven. In keeping with Zambian cultural traditions, she was raised by her maternal aunt, as well as other female relatives including her mother’s siblings and her own older sisters. During her formative years, Bula received her education at Mission Methodist Church residential or boarding schools, namely Keembe Primary and Chipembi Girls secondary schools. It is notable that her father held a ministerial position within the Methodist Church, which subsequently merged with other denominations in the 1960s to form the United Church of Zambia.

Following the completion of Form 5 (Grade 12) in 1968, she commenced her tenure with the Zambia Police Force, thereby becoming the first Zambian woman, notably the first black woman in Zambia, to assume a direct entry into the inspector level. Subsequent to her training, Bula was stationed in Kitwe, situated within the Copperbelt Province of Zambia where she served for a year before resigning due to prevalent patriarchal and male-dominated dynamics within the workplace. She then pursued a cashier position at the Zambia Building Society with aspirations of establishing a career within the banking sector. However, her tenure lasted merely a year, prompting her transition to the role of Youth Secretary for the Copperbelt Province under the auspices of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). Immersed in this capacity, she found fulfilment in facilitating leadership development among female high-school students and engaging in mentorship with seasoned YWCA members. Amidst her tenure in Kitwe, she entered matrimony in 1970 and in January 1971 welcomed her only child. Bula embarked on a six-month in-service training programme in youth work with the Ghana YWCA in Accra, Ghana. Upon her return to Zambia, propelled by a newfound aspiration for academic advancement, she pursued a Diploma in Social Work at the University of Zambia (UNZA) between 1975 and 1977. Subsequently, from 1978–1988, she assumed dual roles as Head of the Women’s Training Programme and Head of Programmes at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, which now functions as the United Church of Zambia University.

Transitioning to Nairobi, Kenya, she served as the Programme Officer for the Women’s Desk at the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) from 1988 to early 1994. Thereafter, her career trajectory shifted to Canada where she held successive positions within the United Church of Canada in Toronto from October 1994 until her retirement in December 2012. Noteworthy, is her emphasis on

the foundational role played by her engagement with the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation and subsequent partnerships in Southern Africa, which paved the way for her later endeavours with the AACC and the United Church of Canada. Her recruitment by the United Church of Canada was propelled by her preexisting engagements in Africa and globally, demonstrating her steadfast commitment to advancing the shared vision of ecumenism.

Circle Economic Ecumenical Commitment

During an interview in April 2022, Bula underscored the pivotal role of her formative experiences at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia, where she assumed consecutive leadership roles as Head of the Women's Training Programme and Head of Programmes over a decade. These engagements laid the groundwork for her subsequent collaboration with the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) from 1988–1994. Serving as the Program Officer for the Women's Desk at the AACC's Nairobi office, she addressed various thematic areas encompassing women's health, child survival and theological discourse on women. In an eulogy delivered by Jerry Pillay, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches stated that "Omega leaves an incomparable legacy of ecumenical leadership in the struggle for racial, gender, economic and social justice in her home country of Zambia, across the African continent, in The United Church of Canada and globally" (WCC 2023).

Despite lacking formal theological training, Bula recognised the imperative of collaborating with theologians, particularly women with such expertise. This acknowledgement prompted her to initiate networks and forge connections with theologians, culminating in the organisation of the inaugural AACC women's conference in Lome, Togo in 1989, which convened approximately 300 African religious women. The conference theme, "Arise and shine for the light has come" (Isaiah 60:1), encapsulated the aspirational tone of the gathering, which sought to explore new avenues for theological discourse within the church.

Bula's presence at the conference facilitated crucial connections with women theologians as the AACC navigated strategies for theological engagement within the ecclesiastical domain.

Following the Lome event, the formation of the Circle occurred promptly, with Bula moving from Togo to Ghana alongside a contingent of women who had attended the Lome conference. The discussions within the Circle conference addressed some of the issues that had been raised during the Lomeⁱ gathering by religious women and this was during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (the Decade). In Lome, women raised critical issues concerning women's health, particularly focusing on the prevailing HIV epidemic, as well as the economic challenges facing women, including the impacts of structural adjustment programmes implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Additionally, discussions centered on child survival and strategies to

address the plight of street children, alongside considerations on how these issues could be approached from a theological perspective. The formation of the Circle was not merely a matter of participation, rather, it involved active engagement in strategic planning aimed at influencing the direction of the church throughout the duration of the Decade of solidarity with women. During the one-week gathering in Lome, religious women delved into the notion of women as agents of change, setting the tone for subsequent discussions and initiatives. These conversations served as the foundation for programmes initiated at the AACC women's desk where Bula was employed during the Decade.

The issues deliberated upon at the Lome conference served as catalysts for her work during her six-year tenure at the AACC, shaping the content and direction of her efforts. Among her numerous responsibilities, she conducted workshops aimed at mobilising women to address the issues highlighted in Lome, while also developing manuals on African women and the economy. Delving into economic analyses and discussions on empire, she notably recognised the pivotal contributions of African women to these dialogues, lamenting the lack of acknowledgement accorded to them. Bula observed a prevailing sentiment within some churches, where men questioned the relevance of women to economic matters. In response, she passionately articulated how women's roles in managing households constitute a fundamental aspect of economic engagement, even for those not formally employed outside the home. She emphasised that economic issues are intrinsic to women's daily lives. In her view, women possess a nuanced understanding of these issues that often goes unrecognised. Bula expressed concern over a perceived decline in energy among women within the church, attributing it to a sense of stagnation in the pace of change.

Even after relocating to Canada, Bula remained connected to the Circle and attended various Circle meetings. Throughout her involvement, Mercy Oduyoye periodically invited her to contribute more substantially to economic initiatives involving women. Bula's role within the Circle often resembled that of a midwife, facilitating discussions and encouraging active participation akin to guiding a woman in labour through the birthing process. Reflecting on the leadership dynamics during the Circle's inauguration, Bula recalled that the leadership during the inauguration such as Elizabeth Amoah and Mercy Oduyoye was grappling with the intersection of religion and culture. This necessitated that all participants approach discussions with an awareness of cultural influences, particularly regarding the impact of culture and religion on women's economic endeavours. For Bula, advocating for gender justice and theology constituted a form of anti-oppression work, aimed at transforming both individuals and societal structures to combat oppression. However, she lamented the delayed establishment of a Circle chapter in Zambia, despite her efforts alongside Rev. Dr Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde to encourage women's participation. Bula noted a misconception among Zambian women that the Circle primarily catered to highly-educated or clergy women, emphasising the importance of inclusive engagement across diverse

socioeconomic backgrounds. She underscored the ongoing need for Zambian women to raise awareness about livelihood challenges, particularly within the context of church expectations for financial contributions from women. Despite not being extensively involved in academic writing, Bula contributed brief pieces during her 18 years within ecumenical spaces, particularly for mission studies meetings.

According to Bula, the Circle has achieved significant milestones despite encountering typical organisational challenges such as struggles with chapters, leadership, funding and capacity building. However, she saw these challenges as normal and not uncommon within organisations. Bula emphasised the resilience, vision and dedication of the Circle, which has persevered for 34 years, demonstrating its commitment to normalising women's experiences within the intersections of culture, faith communities and economies (Bula 2022). She highlighted the enduring presence of the Circle, ongoing publications and the inclusive nature of the community of women engaged in theological discourse. Despite not possessing formal theological training herself, Bula, as a social worker and sociologist, believed that theology permeates everyday life for everyone. Therefore, she advocated for the inclusion of women in the Circle who may not have theological training but are actively engaged with theological concepts in their daily work. Bula further mentioned that she was not a researcher but had written a few publications or speeches she made in ecumenical spaces. Two of those are highlighted here: "Images of Africa: Challenging negative stereotypes in media and society" and "Threats to Women's Rights and Dignity: Tourism and Gender in Africa" in *The Voices for the South Newsletter for Karibu Foundation* (2014).

Conclusion

Omega Bula played a pivotal role not only in the establishment of the Circle but also actively contributed to the planning and strategic discussions aimed at ensuring the representation of African women in global ecumenical forums. The intention was to create a sustainable presence of African women both globally and on the African continent. The birth of the Circle emerged as a result of meticulous planning and foresight, marking a significant milestone in the advancement of women's participation in ecumenical spaces.

Bibliography

- Bula, O. Interview by Mutale Mulenga Kaunda. April 2022.
- Bula, O. "Images of Africa: Challenging Negative Stereotypes in Media and Society." *Africa Files*. 2002. www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=821. Accessed June 2, 2022.
- Bula, O. "Threats to Women's Rights and Dignity: Tourism and Gender in Africa." In *The Voices for the South Newsletter*, Karibu Foundation, 2014. <https://www.karibu.no/upload/voices/Voices%20from%20the%20South%20August%202014.pdf>. Accessed June 2, 2022.

- Dube, M.W. "Fifty Years of Bleeding: A Storytelling Feminist Reading of Mark 5:24–35." In *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, edited by Musa W. Dube, 26–49. Atlanta: SBL, 2001.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.
- Phiri, I.A. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Kachere Series: Malawi, 2007.
- Phiri, I.A. and Nadar, S. (eds.) *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005.
- The World Council of Churches. "WCC Mourns Loss of Omega Chilufya Bula, Who Opened Doors of Opportunity for Many." February 3, 2023. <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-mourns-loss-of-omega-chilufya-bula-who-opened-doors-of-opportunity-for-many>. Accessed March 2023.

Chapter 31

PEGGY MULAMBYA-KABONDE: OUR ZAMBIAN SHERO AND MATRIARCH

Bridget Masaiti Mukuka

'Our different experiences and traditions can become the starting point in the search for the full humanity of women and men and the renewal of creation', (Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde 2021, 38).

Introduction

Rev. Dr Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde stands as a prominent figure within the Zambian Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, distinguished for her integral role in the establishment of the Circle at the youthful age of 28 at the time in Accra, Ghana, in 1989.ⁱ The aim of this chapter is to delve into the life history of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde, exploring her significant involvement in the Circle and elucidating her Theo-philosophical considerations pertaining to African women's theology.ⁱⁱ Furthermore, the paper provides a succinct overview of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde's educational trajectory and professional journey, which culminated in her historic appointment as the first female General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. It also discusses her scholarly contributions through publications. Employing a qualitative approach, the methodology incorporates an extensive literature review of materials relevant to theological life history methodologies, along with personal reflections.

Consequently, the chapter utilises a storytelling approach to convey its findings. Data sources encompass secondary research materials, scholarly books and face-to-face interviews conducted with Mulambya-Kabonde on 25 January 2020. This chapter is one of the 70 contributions to the Circle's publications on the African pioneering matriarchs who attended the inauguration of the Circle in Accra, Ghana in 1989. The chapter attempts to bring to light the Theo-philosophical experience of Mulambya-Kabonde. Furthermore, the chapter highlights her participation in the formation of the Circle and her major theological ideas and will briefly expound on some quotes from her previous work. A selected list of Mulambya-Kabonde's publications in the Circle will be outlined in this paper before the conclusion.

Who is Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde?

Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde was born on 5 May 1961, in Nchanga North Hospital in Chingola in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. She is the fifth child in a family of eight children. Her parents were committed Christians in the Free State Church in Zambia. Her father worked in the mines in Chingola. Mulambya-Kabonde and her siblings were brought up in an environment where most of them in the community were school-going children. Her parents encouraged the children to study and attend church services. She started going to Sunday school and joined the Girls Brigade while she was in Grade 4. Peggy sang in the Sunday school choir and eventually became a Sunday School Teacher. During her Sunday school teaching duties, Mulambya-Kabonde received Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Saviour. By then she was a student at Mporokoso Secondary School. Mulambya-Kabonde completed her secondary education in 1981. She wished to go into ministry but did not have any idea how to go about it. Kangwa (2017, 112) confirms that Mulambya-Kabonde “was inspired by the Roman Catholic Reverend Sisters who used to visit the pupils to preach the gospel and give them spiritual and material support. However, being a member of the UCZ she did not know what steps to take to join the full-time ministry. She had not seen a female ordained minister in the UCZ. The first woman to be ordained as a minister in the UCZ was Peggy Hiscock, a white missionary from the Methodist Church in Britain”.

Mulambya-Kabonde applied to go into ministry in January 1983 at the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Theological College. She is the fourth woman student to have been admitted to training as a minister of the Word and Sacraments at the UCZ Theological College. Sharing her ministerial experience, Peggy explains that,

The first woman to be at the theological college was the Reverend Violet Bredt-Sampa, who was later sent to the University of Zambia as a Chaplain. Then there was Rev. Milandu Mundemba, then there was also Rev. Juliet Matembo and then myself—so you see, there was no woman minister on the Copperbelt Province at that time. And I was stationed right there. At first, it was very difficult for me, but when Reverend Mundemba was sent to the Copperbelt Province, I started getting excited to be in ministry, you know? (Kabonde 2020)”.

The preceding quotation entails that by 1983 there were few women in the theological institutions studying theology and therefore not many women were clergy. Mulambya-Kabonde completed her ministerial studies in 1986 and got married to the late Mr Fred Kabonde in the same year. She was still a young woman when Ms Omega Bula identified Peggy as an emerging African woman theologian. Ms Bula appointed Peggy to attend the first inauguration of the Circle in 1989 in Ghana. According to Mulambya-Kabonde, “It was also my first time to fly out of the country, you know” (*smiling*) (Kabonde 2020).

In the same interview, she explains as follows:

The aim of the first round of women was to bring the African women who had studied theology to be writing and publishing their experiences and the experiences of other women on the continent. It was hilarious to be part of this group of women and in our midst, was a renowned African male theologian; John Pobee who supported the work of the women, (Kabonde 2020).

For Mulambya-Kabonde, being among the delegates who attended and witnessed the inauguration of the Circle made her feel motivated and empowered to continue work as clergy. There is, indeed, an intersectional approach to be deduced in this regard. Firstly, Mbuy Beya (2001, 185) argues that many women are victims of violence from all sides including their own social environment as workers or colleagues. Mulambya-Kabonde was a young African black woman, an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament and meant to carry out God's work in a society that discriminates against women. Secondly, she was not only an ordained minister, but [using an intersectional lens], a young African black woman, a wife, a mother, a reverend in the UCZ and also a congregational minister where the majority of elders were males. Thirdly, Mulambya-Kabonde experienced suppression and marginalisation in her role as a woman reverend. Mbuy Beya (2001, 184) observes that

the church itself has not and does not escape the temptation to discriminate against women, although perhaps never quite so overtly as the rest of the society.

To unpack what Mbuy Beya is saying, the church condones discrimination against women although this cannot be compared to the communities. However, this reinforces marginalisation and stigmatisation as these are not openly addressed in church. Many women like Mulambya-Kabonde face all these challenges and many more in their churches. She was motivated by the invitation to attend the launch of the Circle and by listening to the stories of other women with similar experiences.

The Theo-philosophical experiences of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde

In trying to make others understand how God works, Mulambya-Kabonde observes that "God calls the unqualified and qualifies them" (Kabonde 2020).

She confirms that apart from working tirelessly as a minister in the church, she also worked with the women's guild known as the Women's Christian Fellowship (WCF). She remembers that the women assisted her a lot when she was still young serving as a minister in the church to the extent that she was appointed as the Director of women's work. She taught at the UCZ Theological University before moving to the Council of Churches in Zambia as an Ecumenical and Engagement officer. Mulambya-Kabonde was sent for further studies to pursue a master's degree in theology. After her graduation, she was appointed as the Copperbelt Presbytery Secretary. It was during this period that Peggy contested for the position

of Copperbelt Presbytery Bishop. In an interview conducted by Rev. Dr Jonathan Kangwa, she recounts that,

When I contested for the position of Copperbelt Presbytery Bishop, it was a rough experience because as much as I had support from some people, some leaders at Synod and other presbyteries did not want me to contest. When I lost the elections, I was asked to resign as Presbytery Secretary. But it strengthened me for future challenges. I was not scared to take up any challenge (Kabonde and Kangwa 2017).

Mulambya-Kabonde challenged the status quo of the United Church of Zambia. The authorities during that period were not happy; they were shaken to see a female minister whose purpose, in their minds, was to remain silent and submissive contesting for top positions. Furthermore, Kangwa (2017, 116) affirms that by 2004, the United Church of Zambia had no female Bishop yet, which was the reason Peggy contested the position of Bishop in the Copperbelt Presbytery. She challenged the incumbent Bishop, the Rev. Committee Njase (hereafter referred as Committee Njase) in an election. Mulambya-Kabonde's decision to contest the election attracted condemnation and persecution, especially from the male ministers. She was labelled as an overambitious woman (Kangwa 2017, 116).

Because she was labelled as an overambitious woman, Mulambya-Kabonde was later appointed as an officer and Chaplain at the University of Zambia Interdenominational Church. She also worked as a part-time Gender Director Council for World Mission, Africa region. Mulambya-Kabonde explains that she had little knowledge of drawing up new programmes, "such as incorporating women into the national activities and exposing women to decision-making programs" (Kabonde 2020).

This confirms her argument that God "calls the unqualified and qualifies them". Apart from believing and trusting God over what He has done in her life, Peggy encourages not only women but men as well, to trust in God all the time.

In 2010, Peggy decided to pursue her PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Coincidentally, her supervisor was one of the Circle Matriarchs, who is also the former Circle General Coordinator from 2002–2006, namely, Isabel Apawo Phiri. After being enrolled for a few months, Peggy received a phone call in regard to her appointment to serve as an Interim General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia for two years from 2010–2012. According to Mulambya-Kabonde, "I was not ready for this position, because I did not know where to start from, you know?" (Kabonde 2020).

Nonetheless, she got encouragement from her supervisor, Isabel Phiri. She further echoes Phiri's words that, "You never know what plans God has for your church...since your thesis is only talking about women in your church—you must go there with an open mind because this is not the church of human beings but bear in mind that this is God's church" (Kabonde 2020).

With the advice Mulambya-Kabonde agreed to the appointment of being the first woman General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) a position

she served for ten years. During her reign as the General Secretary, she, like other former General Secretaries, tried to change the face of the Church. She narrates as follows:

It has not been easy to lead a Church of this magnitude, being the first female General Secretary. The Church has been conditioned by patriarchy for a long time. There are scarce financial and material resources. The Church is big and a lot of mission work has to be done. Being a woman, you must be above the board so that people do not think you have failed because you are a woman. You must work hard to win the confidence of the local and international community. We must regain the lost glory of the great UCZ when it comes to financial matters. But as the word of God encourages us, nothing is impossible with God to those who believe. God has been my driving force and a strong tower during difficult moments (Kangwa 2017, 118).

With the help of other church members, Mulambya-Kabonde worked hard to help the church acquire some financial and material resources. It took time for the financial status of the church to gain its stability. I have indicated earlier that Mulambya-Kabonde was also motivated by her PhD supervisor to take up the position of General Secretary. Apart from supporting some clergy to go for further studies, she also sought to revamp the Zambian Circle Chapter and encouraged women, both young and old to research, read and write about their experiences. According to Kanyoro (2006, 37), “Circle women are challenged not only to respond to the dearth of theological literature from African women but also to play a significant role in helping to create and sustain viable communities of women and men in the church and in society in Africa”.

Not only did Mulambya-Kabonde encourage Zambian women to research, read and write, she also motivated her fellow clergy and ordinary members, both women and men, to further their studies. As the members pursued their studies, she encouraged them to have faith and trust in one God. Her teachings were that people should stand firm on the Word of God.

In that regard, Mulambya-Kabonde followed the founder of the Circle, Oduyoye who claims that “every position she has held in public life has almost always been by invitation; she further claims that she made a sacrifice as a teenager while her father assured her that God opens doors for people who care about the well-being of others (Gathogo 2010, 1”).

Oduyoye has shown the Circle members how important the words of a wise African man have impacted positively to many African women of faith. The words have indeed lifted the well-being of many women and men in our society. Seemingly, apart from being a minister of word and sacrament, some of Mulambya-Kabonde’s positions were also by invitation and thus were learning positions such as the Gender Director the position she held without training or studying for it. Her theological ideas are that both men and women in society should work together to bring unity and justice in the community, environment and in the church.

She is also concerned about the environment, as she refers to it as God's creation. According to Mulambya-Kabonde, "the church also needs to be involved as a healing community to both human beings and the rest of God's creation" (Kabonde 2021, 38).

Mulambya-Kabonde observes that if both men and women share their various gifts to advocate against all forms of violence, God's creation will never experience any injustice. Mulambya-Kabonde's research interests include issues of gender justice and inclusivity concerning all God's creation which she has championed and exhibited in her leadership. She has published various papers. Some and [not all] of her publications include:

- 1 2001: 'Single Women Parents in Africa' in Oduyoye M. A. and Kanyoro, M. A. R. *Talitha Qumi, Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*, Accra-North: Sam-Woode. pp. 183–191.
- 2 2014: 'Re-imagining a Gender-Sensitive Theological Education in the United Church of Zambia: Initiating a Paradigm-Shift', in the *Journal of Gender & Religion in Africa*.
- 3 2018: 'The Role of the Church and the Impact of Refugees in our Time' in the *Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies* (OIMTS).
- 4 2021: Salvation Re-Imagined: Theological Perspectives on Gender and Ecology' in Daniel, S., Kebaneilwe, M. D. & Savala, A. (eds). *Mother Earth, Mother Africa, and Mission*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media. pp. 33–50.

She has written and presented papers on gender justice issues. For example, during the inauguration of the Circle in Ghana in 1989, Peggy presented a paper entitled, *Single Women Parents in Africa*. In her presentation, she demonstrated knowledge of how social problems are dealt with in the Western World as compared to Africa, Zambia in particular. Her main concept of transformation in this paper was that all culture-dictated stereotypes of male and female should be challenged and that everyone including those that are at the periphery, children, the poor and widows, should enjoy their human dignity just like Jesus showed in His ministry and life. Peggy presented a paper at the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in 2020. The paper is entitled *Gender Justice Policy*. As of September 2020, Mulambya-Kabonde serves as a Pastoral Minister in the United Kingdom. She is employed by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. She is also the Southern African Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Coordinator. She continues to serve as a Reference group member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. She has served as a global partner with the United Church of Canada and an executive member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Council for World Mission.

Mentorship and Achievements

In her theological and ministerial journey, Mulambya-Kabonde has mentored many females and males in the church, community as well as at the University of

Zambia. While many of them are serving as laypersons and church workers, there are a large number of female and male reverends mentored by her. Most of the people she mentored are Circle members and many have furthered their studies academically. Some of these are Theresa Nanyangwe-Matimba, Upendo Sichone, Georgina Mukupa-Mafwela, Elise Ngona-Ngoma, Harriet Kaira-Kapeya, Rachel Mkandawire-Chipampe, Chali Mfuta, Deaconess Maureen Kaonga-Silwenga, Jonathan Kangwa, Damon Mkandawire, Deaconess Albertina Muwowo-Mwambazi, Deaconess Josephine Kampamba, Deaconess Christabel Mumba and Deaconess Mary Nakamba, Sam Silungwe just to mention a few (Kabonde 2020). Her approach to mentoring people has been very inclusive because she believes that the church is redeemed as a community of equal disciples—with men and women who are “sharing the life of the Church in all its dimensions” (Rakoczy 2004, 216). According to Kangwa (2017, 114). Peggy Kabonde has always advocated for a 50 percent representation between men and women in leadership and all Church forums.

This advocacy is an ongoing struggle that calls females not to fall prey to male leadership but to enlighten females that the Cross of Jesus Christ should not be lifted only on one end.

Conclusion

This chapter employed a storytelling approach to unveil the theological accomplishments of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. It endeavoured to capture her own narrative as she recounts her theological journey and reflects on her experiences as a female minister in the United Church of Zambia. Notably, the chapter highlights her participation in the historic gathering in Accra, Ghana, in 1989, marking the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians thus positioning her as a significant figure within the Zambian Shero community and among matriarchs. Despite facing challenges stemming from her gender, class, age and race, Mulambya-Kabonde’s ascent to prominent positions underscores her resilience and achievements, serving as an inspiration to both men and women of faith.

The narrative further delves into her first-hand encounters with discrimination, suppression and marginalisation within certain congregational settings. Nevertheless, amidst these challenges, she attests to experiencing the presence and power of God in her life, solidifying her role as a Zambian matriarch. She acknowledges her role in mentoring numerous individuals, including ministers of the word and sacrament, deaconesses, lecturers and community workers, such as health practitioners. Throughout her ministerial journey, Mulambya-Kabonde has occupied various leadership positions, a testament to her dedication and impact within her community. The chapter underscores the importance of harnessing the divine power instilled in individuals as children of God, encouraging readers to embrace and share their own stories of faith as sources of comfort and healing.

Bibliography

- Gathogo, J. "Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother of African Women's Theology." *The Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2010): 1–18.
- Kabonde, M.P. "Widowhood in Zambia: The Effects of Rituals." In *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*, edited by Musimbi A. R. Kanyoro and Nyambura J. Njoroge, 195–203. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996.
- Kabonde, M. P. "Single Women Parents in Africa." In *Talitha Qumi: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi A. R. Kanyoro, 183–191. Accra-North: Sam-Woode, 2001.
- Kabonde, M.P. "Re-Imagining a Gender-Sensitive Theological Education in the United Church of Zambia: Initiating a Paradigm-Shift." *Journal of Gender & Religion in Africa* 20, no. 1 (2014): 141–155.
- Kabonde, M.P., and Kangwa, J. Interviews by Bridget Masaiti Mukuka, October 29, 2017.
- Kabonde, M.P. "The Role of the Church and the Impact of Refugees in Our Time." In *The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies (OIMTS)*, 68–72. 2018.
- Kabonde, M.P. Interview by Bridget Masaiti Mukuka, January 25, 2020.
- Kabonde, M.P. "Salvation Re-Imagined: Theological Perspectives on Gender and Ecology." In *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Mission*, edited by S. Daniel, M. D. Kebaneilwe, and A. Savala, 33–50. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2021.
- Kangwa, J. "Pentecostalism, Mainline Churches, and Theological Education in Africa: The Case of the United Church of Zambia." *Expository Times*. Dallas: St. Paul Press, 2017: 95–128.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. "Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle." In *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–42. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2006.
- Mbuy Beya, B. "Women in the Church in Africa: Possibilities for Presence and Promises." In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 183–206. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.
- Rakoczy, S. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004.

Chapter 32

FROM CONTEXTUALISATION TO CRITICAL APPROPRIATION: A NARRATIVE OF A HERMENEUTICAL JOURNEY OF A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE CIRCLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs

Sonene Nwayo and Joyce Tsabedze

Introduction

The individual at the centre of this narrative inquiry ceased to exist in several aspects. Formerly known as Joyce Tsabedze, she underwent a significant transformation five years subsequent to her attendance at the Convocation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians at Trinity College Legon-Accra from 24 September 1989 to 2 October 1989. In 1994, following a legal process, she reverted to her maiden name, Vilakati. This personal journey served as the catalyst for her evolvment and multifaceted feminist hermeneutics.

Ms Joyce Vilakati, born on 11 October 1961, is the youngest among six siblings, comprising three brothers and three sisters. Her father was employed as a labourer in the Water Services Department while her mother fulfilled the role of a homemaker. Although raised in the Catholic faith, she received her education at mission schools affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene during her primary years and the Anglican Church during her secondary education. Vilakati's upbringing involved residing with paternal cousins, resulting in a household that housed 12 children at one point. Their parents taught them values of respect for elders, socially appropriate language for communicating with siblings and other people, speaking the truth, cleanliness and diligence. Vilakati was very close to her parents as the last child in the family and she spent the longest time with them after the rest left the nest.

Vilakati's educational journey began at Manzini Nazarene Primary School, then St Michael's Girls High School. Her excellent performance in O-level examinations paved the way for her at the then University of Swaziland where she pursued a BA

in the Humanities (Double Major in English language and Literature & Theology and Religious Studies). For her post-graduate studies, she enrolled at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago Illinois where she attained a Master of Arts degree in Theology and Religious Studies. She first worked as a teaching assistant, then as a lecturer at the University of Eswatini from 1985 to date. In 1989, she was privileged to attend the historic Conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians where she presented a paper entitled: “Women in the church” (1 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 5:22)”. This paper finally made it into the first-ever publication of the Circle—Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, R.A. (1990). *Talith Talitha, qumi!: proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians, Trinity College, Legon-Accra, September 24–October 2, 1989*. And one other publication by Vilakati is “Religious Pluralism in a Nonpolitical Society: The Case of Swaziland in the ’90s” in *Uniswa Research Journal*, Volume 12, December 1998, p59–66. Her hermeneutical journey which the remaining sections of this chapter discusses, indicates her major theological ideas that the Bible reflects the human struggle to comprehend God through human failings and imperfections. It is a script inviting all humanity to participate in the quest to establish a meaningful relationship with God.

This chapter is therefore a reflection of the personal journey of a founding matriarch whose narrative has remained untold and unsung. It comprises summaries of her publications which demonstrate her feminist hermeneutical acumen, which seeks to give voice to women through methods that allow and encourage the articulation of previously unavailable narratives. Notably, storytelling, oral histories, biographies and life stories reflect a growing awareness of the limits of the androcentric archives that have silenced women and suppressed their perspectives.

What Brought Ms Vilakati to Theology and Religious Studies?

The story of how Ms Vilakati entered the academic field of Theology and Religious Studies cannot be told apart from how she chose to become a teacher. It was while she was in her final year in high school that making a conscious choice for a career was thrust upon her. As a Form Four learner, her class was re-assigned a new teacher for English Language and Literature, Ms Zama when they resumed classes in the second term. Ms Zama was a South African citizen and was a replacement for Fr Chris Hooper who had to abruptly retire on medical grounds (Vilakati 2022). According to Vilakati, her former English Language and Literature teacher was one of the finest and she had come to enjoy his teaching of literature from her Junior Certificate class the previous year. So, when a new teacher was brought in to replace him, Vilakati silently felt a sense of apprehension.

It turned out she did not have to worry because the new teacher was just as fine professionally. From Fr. Hooper, Vilakati learned to fall in love with Literature and she will never forget how captivating she found Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*—a play whose entire cast of characters she found thrilling. But she was

yet to have an eternal imprint on her psyche when she later read Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, a literature set-book from which she learned one outstanding value—the courage of conviction—from the character, Sir Thomas More. Ms Zama entrenched her love for literature but went further to infect her with the bug of aspiring to be a teacher. So, when Mr O.K. Dlamini, an official from the Ministry of Education and Training visited her school to provide career guidance and counselling to her class, Vilakati's career choice was sealed. Later on in life, she would introspectively surmise that the teaching profession found her as much as she found it.

When Vilakati filled in the application for undergraduate studies, her first choice was BA Humanities and her second choice was BA Law. In her first year of the BA Humanities programme in 1980, she picked English Language and Literature, Theology and Religious Studies and Geography. In her second year, she dropped Geography and proceeded as a double major in English Language and Literature and Theology and Religious Studies. She also did a Concurrent Diploma in Education (CDE). Graduating four years later (1984), she then went on to teach for two terms at a rural high school where she taught English Language and Literature and Religious Education at Form Two and Form Four levels (Vilakati 2022).

During her tenure as a high school teacher, Vilakati came across an advertisement for a teaching assistant position within the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA). Promptly responding to the advertisement around July, she awaited a response from the university, which only arrived in October of the same year. Upon receiving her letter of appointment, Vilakati made the decision to negotiate a commencement date for her employment in January of the subsequent year. She reasoned that leaving her high school students in the midst of their last term would disrupt their learning process. The university accommodated her request graciously and thus, she assumed her duties in January 1985. As the time approached for Vilakati to embark on study leave and select her area of specialisation, she opted for Biblical Studies with a focus on the Old Testament. Although she engaged in Hebrew studies as part of her coursework, her true passion lay in approaching the Bible from a literary perspective, stemming from her background and appreciation for literature. Vilakati perceives the Bible as a multifaceted literary masterpiece and a realm ripe for stimulating cognitive and social interactions. Consequently, she has formulated and shared with her students two guiding principles in her biblical studies courses: Firstly, the understanding that one's interpretation of the Bible is fundamentally influenced by their perception of the text, and secondly, the recognition that every interpretation of a biblical passage carries practical implications.

The professional journey

In the early phase of her biblical scholarship, Vilakati had not yet developed a 'hard-nosed' hermeneutic as suggested by Mosala (1989). Such a hermeneutic,

explains Mosala, is based on a comprehensive definition of the complex nature of the entire Bible as a text that is multi-vocal hence it contains both liberatory and counter-liberatory messages despite the editorial attempts that were taken to harmonise it. Persuaded by Mosala's argument, Vilakati has subsequently grown in her hermeneutical journey and in the process has received influence from other Biblical scholars too many to recount in this writing space. However, she mentions with distinction the intellectual mentorship of women and men such as Gerald West and others (Vilakati 2022). With these influences, Vilakati is now able to clearly define her hermeneutic in any analysis of a Biblical text. Vilakati's commitment to an inclusive society has largely been taken to the classroom—in her teaching practice. In all her instructional activities, she strives to embed gender consciousness and to invite her students along to a lived experience of what it means to struggle for an equal society. It is an unfinished story until she exits academia in 2027. She has published some articles such as:

- 1 "A Biblical Portrait of Woman" (1988). Paper presented at the annual BOLESWA Theology and Religious Studies conference held at the University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni Conference Room February 2–3 under the theme 'The Role of Women in Social Transformation' (1990).
- 2 "Women in the church [1 Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 5:22]" p. 84–88. In *Talitha, qumi!: proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians, Trinity College, Legon-Accra, September 24-October 2, 1989 pp.84–88*. Ibadan: Daystar Press. (2002).
- 3 "Lomalungelo's Suppressed Quest for Religious Freedom: Gender Construction in the Book of Job." *UNISWA Research Journal Volume 16*, 28–36. Kwaluseni: University of Swaziland. (2002).
- 4 "God's Vulnerability and Human Vitality in the Book of Job." In BOLESWA Occasional Papers Vol. 1 Number 9. (2008).
- 5 "Faith without Wisdom is Dead: An Exploration of the Integration of the Wisdom Traditions and Jewish Faith in the Old Testament." *BOLESWA TRS Conference Proceedings. Gaborone: Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana*.

Conclusion

Ms Vilakati's journey in biblical hermeneutics has undergone a massive shift since she presented at the said convocation on "Women in the church [1 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 5:22]". When she wrote and presented her short paper with the foregoing title, she was concerned with arguing for a contextualised reading of biblical texts without much critique of the context itself that shaped scriptural content. Many years later, she still believes biblical texts are to be read in context but that such a context itself needs critique and ideological contestation from an explicitly identified hermeneutical perspective. In yet another sense, biblical scholarship for her is no longer about a narrow focus on publishing disciplinary research

but about the intersectionality of teaching and learning in her field. This latter development emerged from her constant passion for teaching and learning which found resonance when she came across the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in the early 2000s. Since then, for Ms Vilakati, biblical scholarship has been informed by a constant reflection on the professional practice of teaching and learning. The three narrative incidents (and everything in between) in Ms Vilakati's hermeneutical journey constitute significant contours in her hermeneutical being and becoming. Interestingly, though happy to identify as a founding member of the Circle of African Women Theologians under the pioneering and visionary leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Ms Vilakati's professional work has seen her growing away from the Circle instead of into it. For her, there is no contradiction or conflict of interest in this reality. The Circle remains a significant catalytic narrative point in her hermeneutical development. Her hermeneutical journey is best conceived as a trench coat of many colours that her Momma and many other women [and some men!] made *with* her.

Bibliography

- Hooks, B. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.
- Mosala, I.J. *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989 (reprinted 1990).
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A. (eds.) *Talitha, Qumi! Proceeding of the Convocation of African Women Theologians Trinity College, Legon-Accra September 24-2 October, 1989*. Accra-North: SWL Press, 1990.
- Ryan, S. "Wisdom." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2008 ed. Accessed August 2008. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/wisdom>.
- Vilakati, J. Interview by Sonene Nwayo, May 4, 2022.

Chapter 33

ALETTA MANDORO: STALWART OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, DEDICATED TEACHER AND WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

Linda Naicker and Kedasaletsa Hlwati

Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the life and times of Aletta Mandoro, pioneer and one of the 70 matriarchs who participated in the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians convocation in Ghana, in 1989. Oral History interviews were employed as the primary mode of data collection. While information related to Mandoro is sparse, the authors endeavoured to trace the early life, ministry and career trajectory of Mandoro, primarily through oral history interviews with her son, whose recollection was vague regarding some areas of his mother's life, work and ministry. A dear friend of Mandoro, Rev. Merriam Fotho, helped fill in some of the gaps. However, it must be noted, that due to a lack of more detailed information, this biography is in no way a comprehensive account of our Circle matriarch but rather, an attempt to honour her life and contribution to the Church, society and the Circle.

Methodology

Oral history interviews were conducted with Mandoro's son, Maholela Mandoro on 15 January 2022. Mr Maholela Mandoro was 32 years old when his mother passed. He said that because she passed away such a long time ago, some areas of her life are very difficult to recollect. Mandoro's friend, Rev. Merriam Fotho was located in June 2022 and an interview with her was conducted on 20 June 2022. The interviews allowed the interviewer to listen closely and attentively to the interviewees in order to ask questions that allowed them to offer context, examples and clarification during the interview process. Open-ended questions were structured chronologically, allowing the interviewee to remain focused without ramblings and repetitions. The interviewer paid special attention to pivotal moments in the life of Mandoro and probed the memory of the interviewees so

that she was able to elicit as much information as possible (UCLA Center of Oral History Research 2018).

Early Life and Family

Aletta Mandoro was born as Aletta Monts'eng Mamonyane Morai on 3 October 1940 to Monaheng Morai (father) and Mantsane Morai (mother). Mandoro was an only child. Her son, Maholela Mandoro sentimentally quipped that it would have been really nice if his mother had siblings who could help him learn about her childhood and family life growing up in much greater detail. The family lived around the area of the Mohale dam in Lesotho at a mission station known as Molikaliko in the district of Molika'Liko. It is said that the famous dam is named after Mandoro's grandparents, the Mohales. Her family was middle-class but actually considered quite wealthy as they owned numerous cattle, sheep and goats and employed herdsmen to tend to their livestock. A diligent and obedient daughter, Aletta herself devoted a vast majority of her early life helping her parents and the herdsmen tend to the family's wealth in the form of livestock. The Mohales were charitable people and always helped people around them but it is unclear whether her parents were involved in any type of formal ministry. Mandoro always boasted to her son that she enjoyed an idyllic childhood despite experiencing some challenges. Mahalela commented that while his mother mentioned that there were some challenges, he does not recall any detail as to the nature of those challenges. According to her son, Mandoro recalled spending blissful days with her parents at the mission station and told Maholela that her love for the church and ministry was ignited there.

Education

Mandoro's parents were passionate about education and emphasised its importance to their daughter. As an only child, she was expected to do well at school and her parents made every effort to ensure that she had all she needed to facilitate her schooling. From a very early age, Mandoro understood and appreciated the value of education and worked extremely hard at both primary and high school levels to ensure that she was able to secure a place at a college of tertiary education. As a black woman in those times, education was a luxury and Mandoro considered herself fortunate to have been able to take her studies to an impressive level. She completed her primary school education in her home village of Molikaliko and was enrolled in high school at Sefikeng High in Lesotho. It is not clear what grade she completed at Sefikeng High because she was later enrolled at Morija Girls High School where she completed her high school education. After completing high school, Mandoro went on to enrol for a teacher training course at Morija Teachers Training College. Morija Teachers Training College was one of the first teacher training centres in the region. Significantly, she met her future husband,

Khiba Mandoro at Morija Teachers Training College. Aletta obtained a Primary Education Teachers Certificate from Morija Teachers Training College and went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in education from the National University of Lesotho in the 1950s. Her excellent performance during her education is a testament to her commitment to educating and inspiring the children in her community.

Marriage and the Family Unit

Aletta Mandoro married Khiba Mandoro in March 1959 and throughout their marriage proved to be a dedicated wife who supported her husband through a myriad of ministerial challenges. The couple had four sons; sadly, one of the sons passed away in 2012. Maholela recalls that the time of his brother's passing was extremely difficult for the family and they struggled to come to terms with the loss. He notes that his mother would not have coped well with her son's passing and is glad that she did not experience the ordeal of losing a child. During the early stages of their marriage, Khiba Mandoro enrolled at the Morija Theological Seminary to pursue a career as an ordained minister of religion at the Evangelical Church of Lesotho. He was soon ordained as a minister of the same denomination and housed at the parish in Cana.

Mandoro was an active participant in supporting her husband in ministry while at the same time, engaged in her own career of teaching primary school children in rural areas of Lesotho. It was a busy and productive time for Mandoro who gave special and particular attention to raising her children well. She wished to instil in them the value of education and the value of being community-minded. In addition, Mandoro was an ardent advocate of the Christian faith and together with her husband, Khiba Mandoro, they instilled in their children a strong commitment and allegiance to the Christian faith (Mandoro 2022). Attending and excelling in school was an imperative and attending Sunday school and other church services was non-negotiable. Maholela reflected as follows:

Life must have been really tough for my mother. She had to make sure her children were safe and taken care of and at the same time attend to duties at the church and her career, all this while my father was experiencing so many challenges in the church that put a strain on the whole family and threatened our wellbeing (Mandoro 2022).

The couple served the communities of Mapholaneng, Mokhotlong, Cana, Malibamat and Masemouse in the district of Mafeteng. In 1979, Khiba Mandoro applied to the Synod Committee of the Lesotho Evangelical Church for leave to study for a degree in theology at the National University of Lesotho. He simultaneously applied for a scholarship to study. Unfortunately, his application was rejected by the Synod Committee of the Evangelical Church of Lesotho. The Committee stated that there was a shortage of ministers and this process would hamper the work of the Church. Khiba Mandoro, determined to pursue his studies and better serve

the parishes in which he worked, enrolled at the National University of Lesotho despite the objection. The Committee responded by ordering Khiba Mandoro to cease all duties as minister of Cana Parish and to vacate the church property. He was also informed that he is no longer employed by the Church and will not receive a salary on the grounds that he had gone to the National University of Lesotho without permission thereby relinquishing control from the Synod and its Committee. This led to a protracted court battle between Khiba Mandoro and the Evangelical Church of Lesotho. The period was a tumultuous time for the Mandoros but they navigated every storm together as a family. At some point, in the 1980s, Khiba Mandoro appears to have taken up employment at the National University of Lesotho. Together with his wife, the couple continued to serve Cana Parish in ministry.

Career and Church Ministry

Mandoro was a committed and dedicated primary school teacher. She loved inspiring young minds to aspire to becoming the best they could be (Mandoro 2022). She taught in rural areas of Lesotho where infrastructure was inadequate and poverty was rife. It is estimated that around 84 percent of the population of Lesotho reside in rural areas where electricity and piped water are a luxury (Macrotrends, undated). This in turn makes poverty in rural Lesotho chronic and perpetual. It is said that education levels in these poorer areas are very low and parents are often unable to provide their children with basic education (Omole 2003). It is in this context that Mandoro applied her skill and dedicated her life to uplifting rural children (Mandoro 2022). She worked tirelessly, often sacrificing personal and family time to attend to the needs of school children.

As a woman profoundly committed to the Christian faith, Mandoro was deeply involved in Church ministry. Even though women were first ordained into ministry in the Lesotho Evangelical Church in 1980, it is unclear whether Mandoro was ever ordained. It is, however, clear that whether ordained or lay, Mandoro's ministry was characterised by a myriad of challenges facing women of her time, both on the home front and in church. Nevertheless, Mandoro served the church with dignity, grace and poise (Mandoro 2022). As a member of the Women of Lesotho Evangelical Church Movement, Mandoro was instrumental in nurturing women regarding their personal experiences and difficulties as well as equipping them to play vital roles in the lives of their local congregations. The Women of Lesotho Evangelical Church Movement was created for exactly this purpose.

Members were expected to provide each other with support and to spend time in prayer for each other and the work of the church. The movement was considered one of the main pillars of the church. In 1989, Aletta was nominated to represent the Women of Lesotho Evangelical Church in Ghana at the first Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians gathering. This was a momentous occasion for Mandoro and to represent the women's movement of her church was an enormous

honour. Her friend, Rev. Merriam Fotho recalls that Mandoro was ecstatic when she received the news of her selection.

She was a wonderful woman, full of love and dedication for the church and to women. She wanted to see all women overcome all their struggles and be involved in the work of the church. The invitation to the first Circle of Concerned gathering was a way to lift the women of Lesotho up. I cannot express the possibilities for women in Lesotho enough that my friend was excited about just for being invited to this one meeting (Rev. Fotho).

Upon her return from Ghana, Mandoro enthusiastically shared her experiences and continued to work side by side with her husband and the Women of Lesotho Evangelical Church Movement (Fotho 2022).

Mandoro enjoyed a fairly healthy life with very few health-related problems. It was therefore a complete shock when she was suddenly diagnosed with heart failure in 1992. Mandoro, wife, mother, minister of the Gospel, dedicated teacher and pioneer member of the Circle sadly passed away from cardiac failure in 1992, shortly after her diagnosis. Rest in power, our matriarch.

Conclusion

While this biography is in no way comprehensive, the authors were able to glean some significant information regarding the life and times of Mme Aletta Mandoro. Her commitment to her family, to education and to the church continues to inspire us and we as the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, celebrate her life and draw strength, courage and wisdom from the stellar way in which conducted her life and represented the church and the women of Lesotho.

Notes

- i Interview with Maholela Mandoro on 15 January 2022. The authors were unable to access further information regarding this mission station.
- ii See: Hitchcock, R. 2015. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project. *Sociology and Anthropology* 3(10). 526-538.
- iii See: Lesotho Evangelical Church v Mandoro (C. (CIV) No. 9. <https://lesotholii.org/node/73>.

Bibliography

- Fotho, M. Oral history interview by the authors with Rev. Merriam Fotho, June 20, 2022.
- Hitchcock, R. "The Lesotho Highlands Water Project." *Sociology and Anthropology* 3, no. 10 (2015): 526-538.
- Macrotrends. "Lesotho Rural Population 1960-2024." Accessed April 5, 2024. <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/LSO/lesotho/rural-population>.
- Mandoro, M. Oral history interview by the authors with Maholela Mandoro, January 15, 2022.
- Omole, D. "Lesotho: A Case Study and Policy Options." *Lesotho Social Sciences Review* 9 (2003): 1-13.
- "Oral History Interviewing Guidelines." Accessed April 5, 2024. <https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/assets/>

Chapter 34

MOTHERING AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGIES: THE STORY OF ANGELENE SWART

Nobesuthu Tom

Introduction

Angelene Swart has been a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians since its inception. She is one of the members who attended the very first Circle meeting in Ghana, in 1989. Although Swart has not maintained consistent participation in the Circle over the years, she has adopted and embodied its principles of opposing injustice and creating space for women's voices to be heard through her work within the Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) where she spent most of her working life. This chapter celebrates her contribution to the Circle and to society in general. It is based on articles Swart emailed to the author and a conversation on Zoom, talking about her life and the Circle.

I read Swart's Curriculum Vitae before our meeting on Zoom. I was amazed at her accomplishments, noting particularly that she was always the 'first' woman and layperson in most of the positions she occupied in the MCSA. Recalling a number of women leaders from companies in which I worked in the past, I expected to meet someone with a forceful energy, embodying the forward thrust of climbing the corporate ladder. It was quite a welcome surprise to encounter someone who was very calm and relaxed and who held her space in the conversation with great dignity, confidence and clarity. In that quiet self-assurance, I could see why members of the MCSA continued to elect her to these positions of leadership and power. She exudes a resolve to help and no intention to fight or do harm.

Background and Educational Training

Swart was born on 2 November 1946 on her grandparents' farm in the Overberg region of the Cape Province, South Africa. This was a politically charged time in South Africa; a time of defiance, violence and fighting for equality and other human rights denied to most South Africans by the apartheid government. Swart describes this period as 'not easy' (Angeline Harriet Swart, Curriculum Vitae) but it is clear

that it served to inform the work to which she later dedicated her life through academic qualifications and work experience. Starting her academic career with a Diploma in Education from St. Augustine's Training College, Johannesburg, Swart went on to acquire a bachelor's degree in theology from the University of South Africa, an Honours degree from the University of the Western Cape, a Certificate in Christian Education and Leadership Training from the Joint Education Board and a Certificate in Training for Transformation from the Training for Transformation Institute. In 2011, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Divinity by the Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem, USA.

Work History

(a) Work within the MCSA

Swart started her work life as a primary school teacher. She occupied this role for 12 years and left it in 1976. This did not mark the end of the road for her calling as a teacher, both in the classroom and in life, generally. She spent some years as a lecturer at the Moravian Theological Seminary (South Africa) teaching Practical Theology and Missiology. The realm of her teaching experience later expanded into leadership positions in which she was often the 'first' in the church's history. In 1984, Swart became the first female director for Christian Education in the MCSA. Furthermore, 1994 became another year of 'firsts' with Swart becoming the first woman and layperson to serve as Director of the MCSA Seminary. She held this position until 2001. Within this period, her leadership role expanded beyond the seminary. Moreover, 1998 marked the beginning of her career within the broader MCSA. From 1998–2000, she served as the Vice-President of the MCSA, after which she was elected as the church's President for two terms (2001–2003 and 2004–2008). This election of a woman and layperson was yet another 'first' in the MCSA's history. An even greater achievement for Swart was her election as President of the worldwide Moravian Church.

No stranger to the pursuit of social justice and the protection of human rights, Swart also served on various boards that sought to protect and promote the rights of women within the MCSA and beyond. Her love of education also became evident through either the roles she filled or the work of the boards in which she served. She was a founder member of the worldwide Moravian Women's Desk in which she also served as a board member for the African region. The aim of this desk was to source bursaries for women and girls. She continued her contribution to the Moravian seminaries by serving as a board member of the Moravian Church Foundation whose task was to generate funding for the seminaries worldwide. Throughout this period, Swart never forgot women living outside city centres. She also served on the Moravian women's board, looking after the needs of congregational organisations in rural and urban areas.

(b) Work beyond the MCSA

Swart's leadership qualities and experience opened up opportunities to offer her services beyond the MCSA. Following the spirit of ecumenical fellowship, she served as Chairperson of the South African Council of Churches, Western Cape and as a member of the Lutheran World Federation Council. True to her love of education, Angelene also worked with ecumenical organisations such as the South African Council for Theological Education as well as the Joint Board for the Diploma in Theology in SA.

Participation in the Circle

Swart describes the Circle's meeting in Ghana in 1989 as "the moment that my life was set on a journey that by far exceeded my own expectations."

This moment set her on a path to courageously "encourage, empower and develop the potential, talents, dreams and gifts of women."

She did this through the speeches she delivered at several conferences and gatherings during her career. Her roles in the MCSA afforded her opportunities to travel and interact with various communities. It is on these platforms that she could live out the principles of the Circle.

Theological Ideas

During the virtual interview I had with Swart, she stated very clearly that to her, theology has to be practical. It should focus on helping women navigate the challenges they face on a daily basis and not be a concept that has no meaning in women's contexts. She stated, "as a practical theologian, it is important for me that the dialogue between us as women regarding our day-to-day real-life challenges remains central in addressing the issues of women."

In her notes for her address of the third Moravian Women's Consultation in Herrnhut, Germany in 2008, on the issue of the violence women face in the world, Swart wrote:

How can we speak about spirituality?

When sexually violated women have problems with the concept of God as almighty, ever-present and all-knowing?

When they feel guilty because God has seen everything?

When they feel angry because the all-powerful and ever-present God did not come to their aid when needed?

When they tend to denounce God, or they feel betrayed by God?

To those whose life-experiences have been scarred by the wounds of suffering and oppression, the term *spirituality* may suggest escapism, passivity, silence, indifference, strangeness or un-involvement. How can we empower ourselves and others to draw on a *spirituality* that can assist us to be valiant, bold, brave, courageous, confident, determined and resolute in the face of violence?

In answer to these questions and many others relating to women's struggles, Swart suggests that "As women we must find the interpretative key to use today when struggling with God's word in relation to our struggles (in doing our theology)."

Selected List of Publications

Much of Swart's career has entailed travel around the world to deliver papers on theological education and women's work and development. She has also contributed articles on women and theology in magazines and books. Some of the papers she has delivered include the list below:

- a 'The history of two outstanding Indigenous women who contributed to the establishment of the Moravian Church in South Africa'—published in 'Digging up our foremothers' edited by Christina Landman (Unisa).
- b 'Women in leadership—Overcoming the challenges of feminine identity'—Botswana conference for Lutheran and Moravian female clergy.
- c 'Violence and poverty' delivered for a Moravian women's conference in the Netherlands.
- d 'Am I my sister's keeper' keynote address at international women's consultation in Suriname.
- e 'The violation of gender exclusion in the management of the Church' for the United Congregational Church in South Africa—Thursdays in black—virtual programme .
- f 'Gender sensitivity and inclusive language' for the Moravian Church in South Africa Doctrinal Commission.
- g 'Standing with our sisters' campaign' international Moravian Church campaign and speaker at the conclusion of the campaign in North Carolina, USA.
- h 'The plight of migrant woman in South Africa' for Moravian Church in South Africa.
- i 'Valiant women in a violent world' International Moravian Women's Consultation in Germany.
- j The Anti-Gender Based Violence Resource group of which Angelene is a founder member, wrote an article on 'Violence against women—A South African epidemic aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic' This article was published in December 2021 in the Insights Magazine of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity, Stuttgart, Germany.

Current Activities

Even though Swart has retired from formal employment in the MCSA, she continues to do work that supports the objectives of the MCSA. She is a facilitator and presenter of developmental programmes for women in the Cape Town North District of the MCSA. She trains a group of women so that they too, may go on to train other women. She is also active in local congregational educational programmes and the training of members of the MCSA.

With Gender-Based Violence being one of the major challenges in the lives of women, Swart is applying the practicality of her theology as a founder member of an Anti-Gender Violence Resource Group that serves churches and communities. She is also a patron of Elim Home for children with mental and physical disabilities.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to celebrate the contribution Swart has made to the Circle and to society in general. While Swart has not been consistent in her participation within the Circle, she certainly has contributed to its agenda of fighting injustice and making women's voices heard. Firstly, she worked hard to be elected to many positions of leadership where her own voice could be heard and, secondly, she continues to participate in projects in which women are empowered through education and training. Her extensive work in the MCSA bears out her theological principle of finding practical solutions to women's real-life and day-to-day challenges. Her life's work is a testament that advancing the mission of the Circle cannot only be done through work done directly within the Circle but also through the embodiment of its principles. I wish Angelene Swart many more years of good health, to continue doing the work she has been called to do.

Notes

- i This work is based on research supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa under the auspices of the Desmond Tutu Chair in Religion and Social Justice, Grant Number: 118854. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this research are mine alone; the National Research Foundation accepts no liability in this regard. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are mine and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.
- ii Swart, A.H. (2008). Paper delivered at 3rd Moravian Women's Consultation. Herrnhut, Germany, 19 – 25 June 2008.
- iii Curriculum Vitae of Angelene Harriet Swart
- iv Curriculum Vitae of Angelene Harriet Swart

Bibliography

Swart, A.H. Curriculum Vitae.

Swart, A.H. "Paper Delivered at the 3rd Moravian Women's Consultation." Herrnhut, Germany, June 19–25, 2008.

Chapter 35

A HEAVENLY GENDER INJUSTICE PROTEST FROM REV. CHIPO MTHOMBENI TO THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE (ELCZ)

Snenhlanhla Chisale and Elitha Moyo

Introduction

In Africa, there is noticeable gender justice taking place in the leadership structures of the mainline church, with some handful of mainline churches in Southern Africa led by female bishops. However, the road to gender justice is still long and steep, particularly in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) where there is still a noticeable gender gap in important decision-making positions. Written from an integration of African women's theology and African feminist theory, this chapter imagines what the late Reverend Chipso Mthombeni, the first female clergy to be ordained by ELCZ would have said about this injustice to the church leadership and parishes across the country. Narrative research methodology is used to explore her imagined responses to the gender justice question at ELCZ. Looking back to the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (thereafter Circle), Rev Mthombeni laments that her journey across the continent to Ghana for the inauguration of the Circle seems to be in vain as some still disregard gender justice in ELCZ leadership structures. The chapter looks at the theology of Rev Mthombeni and the gender justice work she did under the banner of ELCZ and her community since her ordination. The chapter also critically explores what the ELCZ did to populate and implement her theology if they did anything at all.

Background

The gender justice struggle in the mainline church in Africa has existed for decades and the struggle continues, specifically in conservative countries where the church doctrine still follows missionary theologies. Female clergy bears the sword of gender injustice in the church where they remain in lower positions due to their gender. Although female membership of the mainline church exceeds the 80 percent margin, the Church is still under the leadership of men who proclaim gender

justice but look aside when they are supposed to implement it (Chisale 2020). This chapter explores the question of gender justice in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) by imagining what the late Reverend Chipso Mthombeni would have said. Mthombeni was the first female clergy member to be ordained by ELCZ in 1992.

One can imagine what Mthombeni experienced in the seminary during training and church structures after her ordination. Thus, this chapter explores Mthombeni's journey as an ordained minister in a highly toxic masculine and patriarchal space. We, therefore, present her theological vision while imagining her fears and strengths in the gender justice struggle in ELCZ. The aim is to imagine what she would have said about the current gender justice question to the ELCZ leadership and congregants across the country. Looking back to the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (thereafter Circle) in 1989, this chapter imagines Mthombeni's journey across the continent to Ghana for the inauguration of the Circle. It explores why Mthombeni's journey was significant for the contemporary ELCZ membership. Thus, an analysis of the progress that ELCZ made since Mthombeni departed is made in dialogue with her.

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

African women theologians and African feminist's philosophies have some similarities, which include the inclusion of men in the gender struggle. This means that the gender struggle is a community's struggle. The two complement each other in that African women theologians like African feminists argue that African women and men are not opponents but that they complement each other in order to help their society survive and develop (Oduyoye 1994). Oduyoye developed a two-winged theology in emphasising partnership between women and men in ministry (2001). In her argument Oduyoye (2001) argues that if theological praxis is to be genuine and relevant in Africa it should be balanced, hence her concept of two-winged theology uses the image of a flying bird, where she explains that theology without the faith reflections of women is like a bird with only one wing, disabled and unable to take to the air. For a bird to fly high it needs both wings to be balanced as a result for our Christian witness to be effective both men and women should work in partnership. In agreement, African feminists like Buchi Echemta (1988) argue that 'as much as we need our men in this gender struggle, our men need us to remind them that we are both victims of patriarchy; that since we stood side by side as men and women in the struggle against colonialism, we can still stand side by side in fighting patriarchy. The philosophy of African women theologians and feminists is linked to Paulo Freire's (1970) thinking that for liberation to have meaning, both the oppressed and the oppressor must be liberated. In this chapter, we borrow from the African Feminist Charter of Principles (2006) which acknowledges that African women are part of a global feminist movement against

patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. The African Feminist Charter of Principles asserts that:

Our experiences are linked to those of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women's resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves strategies for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists)

Our thinking draws from this theorising, writing, strategising, speaking and valuing ourselves as African women by unveiling the critical strides that our ancestors have played in dismantling patriarchy. We do this through narrative research. African women theologians use storytelling or narrative research as a method of research. African women have used this method in their research in particular their book, *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa* edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri, Devarakshanam Betty Govinden, Sarojini Nadar in 2002, chronicles their narrated stories as they struggle with patriarchy. Narrative research has a political commitment to give voices and names to silenced and hidden lives (Sikes, Troyna and Goodson 1996). Nadar (2014) says stories are data with Soul'in her article titled: "*Stories are data with Soul*"—lessons from *Black Feminist Epistemology*.

In this research Nadar describes the power of the story in research as she argues that "stories are a tool of knowledge gathering as well as knowledge sharing."

We therefore draw from the integration of African women theologians and African feminist philosophies to imagine what Chipso Mthombeni would have said about the current gender justice question in the ELCZ leadership and congregants across the country. Methodologically we employ narrative research to tell her story.

The story of Chipso Mthombeni

Mthombeni was born on 15 April 1965 in Mberengwa Musume Mission, Zimbabwe. She was the fourth child born in a family of ten to Jestinah Mthombeni and Misheck Mthombeni. She was baptised as an infant in ELCZ and at the age of 12, she joined the catechism classes in preparation for confirmation to full membership and was confirmed at the age of 13 by the same church. Mthombeni attended her primary education at Chaora Primary School from 1974–1980 and she went to Masase Mission for her secondary education from Form One to Form Four in 1981–1984. After completing her Form Four, Mthombeni was employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1986 to take up a temporary teaching post at Mashura Primary School in Mberengwa (Informal conversation with Mthombeni's brother Mthombeni M 22 November 2022).

Chipso Mthombeni – The First Female Ordained into Ministry of the Word and Sacrament in ELCZ

Mthombeni's dedication to ministry was noticeable at an early age. As an adolescent, she was active and committed to youth ministry. At the age of 22, she answered her calling into Holy ministry. She was still single and active in youth ministry when the church (ELCZ) sent her to United Theological College (hereafter UTC) the affiliate of the University of Zimbabwe where she studied for an Honours in Theology leading to her ordination in 1990. After Ordination Mthombeni advanced her studies at the University of Zimbabwe and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1993 (Informal Interviews with Mthombeni's Mthombeni M 22 November 2022).

Chipso Mthombeni – The Wife and Mother

At the age of 29, Mthombeni got married to Mufandaedza Hove in 1994. She was called into glory in 1995. She did not have children but she was survived by her husband and parents. Although she did not have biological children, she was a mother to all children that surrounded her. All nieces and nephews called her 'Mama.' The youth members in ELCZ saw a mother in her and called her their Mama rather than Reverend (Informal Interviews with Mthombeni's (Mthombeni M 22 November 2022)). Motherhood in Africa is defined by the number of children one has looked after even when she has not carried them in her womb because motherhood is communal in African culture. This is confirmed by Mercy Oduyoye (1999) who writes from her lived experience of not having biological children, she asserts that although she did not have her own biological children, she realised her motherhood through the community that surrounded her and referred to her as 'Mama Mercy'. In confirming her motherhood status, Oduyoye (1999:119), says "I have no biological children but I have children".

This is how Mthombeni lived her motherhood role.

Chipso Mthombeni – The Saint Speaking to ELCZ about Gender Justice

When the question of gender justice is raised, some think about feminism and some think about angry women who have failed in their marriages and therefore are angry at the way society is structured. Mthombeni reminds the ELCZ about what Mercy Oduyoye the founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter Circle) says regarding gender justice. In campaigning for gender justice Oduyoye (1990 [2001]) calls for a two-winged theology which she says is a partnership between men and women. Critiquing male dominance in church administration and academia Oduyoye (1990 [2001]) argued that a bird cannot take off from the ground to the skies with one wing. For a bird to fly, it must have two strong wings. Thus, the exclusion of women in important decision-making posts in church and theological academia disregards God's image in them

and God's purpose for them in stewardship. Mthombeni condemns those who try to silence women who stand up for gender justice. She urged remembering her journey to Ghana so that she could represent the ELCZ women in campaigning and advocating for gender justice in church and academia (ELCZ Church Council Minute No.92 1992).

The silencing of women who advocate for gender justice is highlighted by Oduyoye who argues that women who stand up to and oppose patriarchy are assumed to have issues or difficulty in relating to men or worse, they have failed marriages (1994, 169; Chisale 2017). Although Mthombeni graduated into glory before the Sustainable Development Goals, she challenged ELCZ that gender justice is a developmental principle that empowers both men and women and is very significant in achieving post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mthombeni says the developmental significance of gender justice as attested in the SDGs is that it responds to the Great Commission (Mt 28:16–20). The Great Commission provides a focus for gender justice in Christian structures because it does not discriminate or segregate people through their gender.

Mthombeni who crossed the borders to attend the inauguration of the Circle in Ghana continues to remind the ELCZ leadership and congregants that she is embarrassed in heaven because what she fought for is not implemented. Mthombeni's sister Saint Mary Magdalene often asks her to look at how the highest office in the ELCZ is 100 percent male. Mthombeni then says Saint Mary and other Saints in heaven and Jesus Christ the risen Saviour sent her to ask the ELCZ how then are they witness in the resurrection of our Saviour when it is only men sitting on top positions making decisions about Christ's church? Have you forgotten that the first witness of the resurrection of Christ our Saviour was a woman, to be specific, sister Saint Mary Magdalene and other Women Saints? According to Mthombeni, sister Saint Mary Magdalene asked her the following questions:

Where are all the women worshipping in ELCZ? Are they not fit to hold the highest office of ELCZ and be witnesses of Christ's resurrection? Why are they still singing from the pews and not leading from the front? Have they forgotten that it is us women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna (wife of Chuza), Mary (mother of Jesus and widow of Joseph), Mary (mother of James and Joses/Joseph), Mary (wife of Clopas), Salome (mother of James and John) and other women) who were the first disciples to witness and proclaim the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Mthombeni's lament addresses the gender injustice that she currently observes with other women Saints taking place in the mainline church, particularly ELCZ. In protest against gender injustice in church spaces, Mercy Oduyoye says:

When I think about the church, I think of all women presumed dead or who are dying, who attend Sunday services and are presented week after week before all-male panels of celebrants. Then I pray that women will hear the voice of Jesus saying to them, 'Daughter arise'. I pray they will wade through the muddy terrain

of prejudice, taboo and silence and find their way to touch Jesus and feel the healing stream flowing from him, healing their marginalisation. I pray that the church does the same so that it might be healed of its ineptitude so as to become a power that empowers all in the community it seeks to minister to (2005, 154).

The church has for a long time been an incubator of patriarchy that delays gender justice. Women, who are the majority in the pews, have been treated as invisible and have been governed by men from the top hierarchy to the bottom of the hierarchy, all leadership has been in the hands of men. The ELCZ is among the mainline churches in Zimbabwe that are struggling about what gender justice is really about and how it should be implemented. Like secular organisations, the mainline church confines gender justice and issues of gender justice in a small gender desk of the church. The gender desks often prioritise issues of gender-based violence. Seemingly women are confined as victims rather than leaders. Although the desk is often active like in the ELCZ, the macro management of the desk by the Church and church doctrine limits this desk. As a result of this, Elitha Moyo the ELCA Regional Representative for Gender Justice and Programs, says “the ELCZ continues to consider women as part of men’s property and only good for household chores” (2021, viii).

Moyo rightly raises the question of gender justice in ELCZ and exposes how female clergy in this church are treated compared to their male counterparts. It is clear from Moyo’s study that gender justice is not about raising women’s voices or reaching a quota system but is about equity and equality between men and women. In ELCZ, all Bishops are male and one wonders what they plan and coordinate for a church which is predominantly female. Research highlights that male leaders in church structures tend to ignore issues that affect women, both in church and society because they do not want to lose power (Gunner 2015, 33). Chisale argues that male leadership in top structures of the church delays reformation and transformation of the church that Martin Luther and other church mothers and fathers fought so hard to achieve (Chisale 2020). This is because rather than focusing on the struggles of women who are the majority in church, male leadership tends to use patriarchy and treat the church as their domestic household, similar to how they govern their wives and children. Mthombeni’s journey across sub-Saharan Africa to Ghana to participate in the inauguration of the Circle is disrespected by the slow progress of gender justice in ELCZ and the Saints and matriarchs who graduated into glory lament this delay.

Chipó Mthombeni and Gender Justice in ELCZ

Mthombeni as the first female ordained in ELCZ introduced the church as a body and structure to gender justice. This is attested by her move to join the Circle’s inauguration where she and other African matriarchs met under the common quest for gender justice in church and theological academia. Although she did not publish during her Earth days, Mthombeni’s theological work is a clear indication

that she was on the right path of conscientising ELCZ to issues of gender justice. One can imagine how difficult it was for her to stand against the beast of patriarchy in the church as the only ordained woman before she was joined by Rev. Dr Chiropafadzo Moyo some months later. Musa Dube asserts that gender justice is about “transforming power in God’s household” (2001, 9).

Who dares transform power in the household of God without experiencing harsh judgement and resistance if not excommunication? For a young emerging theologian and clergy such as Mthombeni, the struggle for gender justice was harsh. She experienced resistance and judgement as she sought to challenge the powers or patriarchy in ELCZ. We can imagine what people said in their private spaces about her: Some asked questions such as *vele ngubani owathi abafazi bayagcotshwa ukuba ngabafundisi kubhalwe ngaphi ebhayibhilini?* (Who said women should be ordained into ministry, where is it written in the Bible?) while some said: *Yoh liyazibona isinto zabafazi khathesi sebefuna ukuba ngoBishop... abafazi mele bazi ukuthi indawo yabo, yikusonta lokuthandaza lokunikela, abayeke imisebenzi yokuphatha emadodeni* (Yoh! look these women are fighting to be bishops...women should know that their place in the church is to worship, pray and offerings. They must leave leadership jobs to men). Such statements have challenged Oduyoye to pose questions such as:

Should women simply look on as men build empires that survive on the blood and sweat of women? Should we continue to indulge, pamper and worship our men folk even when we see them clearly acting contrary to the good of the whole community? (1998, 110).

The protest by Mthombeni and fellow Saints is that it has been close to three decades since her graduation into glory but ELCZ is still the way she left it, under the leadership of all men. Mthombeni and fellow Saints like Mary Magdalene and others are disappointed by the silence of women in the Church; thus, they argue that Musimbi Kanyoro (2002) is right when she says we must speak up and call for the transformation of those aspects that weaken life and the values of justice in the church. According to Kanyoro, “speaking up on issues that diminish life has been the most difficult part of our self-understanding as individuals and churches ... speaking up involves foremost risking the wrath of the powerful. Those who have dared to speak out despite all risks involved are the prophets that our continent [Africa] badly needs today” (Kanyoro 2001, 176).

Mthombeni reminds ELCZ congregants, both women and men to be prophetic and call for gender justice remembering what she did when she was an earthly servant of the Lord in ELCZ and communities around ELCZ.

Mthombeni’s Ministry and Gender Justice

During her ministerial work, Mthombeni’s quest for gender justice led her to establish a shelter to accommodate women and girls who were experiencing

violence. The shelter was in Bulawayo and accommodated over 50 women and girls. She offered counselling services and empowerment projects to victims. The project was supported by the Finish church. She dedicated her ministry to giving the victim a voice by encouraging victims to speak and act against their abuse. Women and girls in this shelter used their stories to empower each other against being victims to victors. It is unfortunate that ELCZ donated the house that Mthombeni had established as a shelter to accommodate victims of GBV to the Bulawayo old people's home as soon as she graduated into glory. Is this what Mthombeni would have wanted?

Conclusion

ELCZ forgot Mthombeni's theological vision for gender justice sooner than it should have. The donation of the shelter that she established for GBV victims was stooping so low by the church and showed that issues of gender justice and women empowerment are not a priority in ELCZ. Rather than honouring the legacy of Mthombeni by extending the shelter to accommodate and liberate more women and girls and ordaining more women into ministry and top leadership posts, ELCZ does the opposite. She highlights the most critical issues that affect women's faith in their ministry and this clearly indicates that male leadership in church structures hardly prioritises women's needs and issues that affect women's faith. The work that has been done by ELCZ thus far on gender justice does not honour Mthombeni's hard work as a female clergy and matriarch of the Circle. Notably, the gender desk that has been established is progressive, however, it is somehow reduced into a talk show by lack of action in transforming ELCZ from leadership to pews.

Notes

- i <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/the-charter-of-feminist-principles-for-african-feminists/>, accessed 14 November 2013.

Bibliography

- "Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists." Accessed November 14, 2013. <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/the-charter-of-feminist-principles-for-african-feminists/>.
- Chisale, S.S. "Deliver Us from Patriarchy: A Gendered Perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and Implications for Pastoral Care." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41, no. 1 (2020): a2003. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2003>.
- Chisale, S.S. *Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women*. Unpublished PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2017.
- Church Council Minutes Number 92. 1992.
- Church Council Minute Number 99. 2002.

- Dube, M. "Introduction: 'Little Girl, Get Up'." In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 3–24. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.
- Gunner, G. "Burning Issues." In *Lutheran Identity and Political Theology*, edited by Carl-Henric Grenholm and Göran Gunner, 30–48. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015.
- Echemta, B. "Feminism with a Small 'f'" In *Criticism and Ideology: Second African Writers' Conference*, edited by Kirsten Holst Petersen, 173–185. Stockholm: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988.
- Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary Edition. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1970 [2005].
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2002.
- Moyo, E. *Gender Inequality among Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ): A Pastoral Womanist Critique of the Exclusion of Female Clergy from the Top/Senior Leadership of the ELCZ*. Unpublished PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2021.
- Mthombeni, M. Informal conversations with the author, November 22, 2022.
- Nadar, S. "Stories Are Data with Soul: Lessons from Black Feminist Epistemology." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 28, no. 1 (2014): 18–28.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Feminist Theology in an African Perspective." In *Paths of African Theology*, edited by Rosino Gibellini, 166–181. London: SCM Press, 1994.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Woman-Centeredness and Religion: The African Woman's Dilemmas." In *There Were Also Women Looking on from Afar*, edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Irja Askola, 109–122. Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1998.
- Oduyoye M.A. "Coming Home to Myself: The Childless Woman in the West African Space." In *Liberating. Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "The Search for a Two-Winged Theology." In *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 31–56. Accra-North, Ghana: SWL Press, 1990 [2001].
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Ecclesiology in African Women's Perspective." In *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, edited by Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 146–156. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005.
- Phiri I.A., Govinden, Devarakshanam Betty, Nadar Sarojini *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2002.
- Sikes, P., Troyna, B. & Goodson, I. *Talking lives: A conversation about life history*, Taboo, 1, Spring, (1996): 35-54.

Chapter 36

CHRISTINE MANDA: MARGINAL WOMEN AND THE CHURCH IN MALAWI

Dorothy Tembo

Introduction

In Africa, the link between the church and society has been the subject of much research and study (Dubbey & Banda 2005; McCracken 2012). Several studies have demonstrated that church institutions and structures directly replicate African customs and traditions (Ghosh 2004; Phiri 1997). There is considerable evidence to suggest that the African patriarchal system has impacted women's mobility and agency in the church (Mupangwa & Chirongoma 2020; Obia 2018). As a result, the Circle of Concerned African Theologians (henceforth, Circle) was formed, among other roles, to examine culture and the church to challenge all types of prejudice against women. This is achieved by promoting women's theological education and publications on religion and culture. For the past three decades, the Circle has produced critical literature examining the nexus between gender, culture and religion in Africa. Isabel Apawo-Phiri and Fulata Moyo are pioneers in the field of Malawian studies on women in the church and have made significant contributions to our knowledge and understanding of gender and culture in Malawi. Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler's (2017) study highlights the significance of their work to Malawi and Africa. Nevertheless, this essay investigates the obscure and mysterious life of Christine Manda.

The main aim of this chapter is to examine the obscurity and marginality of Manda in the context of debates about women's ordination in Malawi in order to improve our understanding of both contemporary and historical issues that limit women's participation in church and society. I use marginality and obscurity to convey the fact that Manda's life is mysterious as there is no publication of her name and church records and testimonies have been difficult to obtain, apart from the fact that after her theological training, she was denied ordination. This poses a challenge when writing a biographical account of the matriarch due to the lack of reliable sources to supplement oral sources. I approach this issue from a broader perspective by situating her life within the larger debates about women's

ordination in Malawi. For the purposes of this chapter, I am only interested in contextualising her life experience as a woman who qualified for ordination but was denied ordination because of gender. This solution is neither easy nor without challenges, as much of the focus will be on the historical factors that have limited women's participation in the church. It does not provide or offer an analysis of Mandas Circle's activities and impact in Malawi and Africa.

This chapter is divided into two sections including the introduction. It describes the life of Christine Manda, the context in which she worked and discusses key issues related to women's ordination in Malawi. I intend to show that Manda, in her silence and marginalisation, embodies the challenges faced by everyday women in society. To accomplish this, I will examine the conditions and welfare of Malawian women in the church and society during the 1980s and 1990s. Due to the lack of literature written by Manda, the chapter will rely on secondary sources.

The church and women ordination in Malawi

In 1989, Manda attended the first meeting of the Circle in Ghana. Little is known about her subsequent engagement in Circle events and advocacy for women's theological education in Malawi. Fiedler (2017) thinks that Manda's status in the church prevented her from becoming involved in the Circle. Manda, according to Fiedler, was more concerned with maintaining her position inside the Church because the early winds of emancipation were too extreme for some women (Fiedler 2017, 90). In this essay, I wish to rethink Christine Manda's life and propose an alternative interpretation of her supposed silence and marginalisation. I will give a detailed explanation in the following paragraphs.

Manda was a member of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The CCAP comprises three synods: Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre. She was a member of the Livingstonia Synod, founded by missionaries from the Free Church of Scotland. Late in the 19th century, missionaries from Scotland and South Africa founded the CCAP. Beginning with the colonial and missionary periods, the three synods did not support women's ordination. In the mission churches, women were educated for household duties, while men were educated to become pastors and social leaders (Phiri 1997). It is interesting to note that the church fought women's ordination even after the missionaries' departure.

The ordination of women remained a contentious topic not just due to the legacy of missionary teaching but also because it represents the patriarchal norms of most African societies, which relegate women to the domestic domain and usher males to the public arena. African culture fosters the subordination of women and these cultural characteristics have also influenced church disputes about ordination and led to the exclusion of women from church leadership positions. It is within this context that Manda operated and served the church. Despite her theological schooling, the church denied her ordination. This is not surprising considering that the Presbyterian Church prioritised male education starting from the colonial era

(Phiri 1997). While women were trained for domesticity, men received training to be ministers and pastors in their communities.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a lack of theologically educated women in Malawi and the rest of Southern Africa. In her work '*African Women's Theologies in the New Millennium*,' Phiri laments the dearth of women in theological studies and the dangers this poses to the integration of women into the church and society (Phiri 2004). Despite her education, Manda was employed as the leader of the *Umanyano* women's guild within the Livingstonia Synod. In this way, the patriarchal leadership had limited her impact on women's activities and the wider church did not profit from her theological studies.

One may, of course, claim that the church acknowledged Manda and gave her a position overseeing women because women make up the majority of church members. It is necessary to point out that membership in the women's guilds is voluntary; hence, not all women are members of these organisations. A relatively small fraction of all women voluntarily contributes their time and effort. Studies have shown that the church pushed women into leadership positions in the women's guild because they did not know what else to do with them and wanted to give the idea that the church was using them. This was done to create the image that women were being utilised by the church (Mombo 2008).

The fact that she does not participate in many church events may be the reason why we have not heard much about her following the Circle meetings. Phiri and Moyo were academicians who wrote openly about women's experiences and did not face barriers imposed by the church. In contrast, she went back to the church, which placed restrictions on her. This demonstrates that subordinationism is widely practised inside the church. Phiri adds that in many African communities, men are regarded more than women, which makes it harder for women to cultivate meaningful relationships with themselves, other people, creation and God (Phiri 2000).

The Impact of Marginalisation of Women on the Church

The marginalisation of Manda is of grave concern to the Church of Malawi during the era. The ban on women's ordination has left a legacy for the church in terms of power and leadership, now and before. Without ordination, women were excluded from positions of leadership. To reiterate, the church and society were divided on the ordination of women (Obia 2018). Women are now admitted for ordination; thus, it must be acknowledged that the church has made progress in this regard. Therefore, one may conclude that the church has made substantial advances by abandoning conventional requirements that position women behind males and by embracing the ordination of women. The CCAP has ordained women as pastors since then. Martha Belinda Mwale was ordained as a pastor in the Livingstonia Synod in October 1999 (Kanjaye 1999). The decision was hailed as a "symbol of

tolerance, the pursuit of gender justice and regard for human dignity” (Kanjaye 1999).

In 2001, Blantyre Synod appointed Edna Navaya as a pastor.

Despite this, in some cases, women-ordained pastors are not fully integrated into the church and are not accorded the same respect as their male counterparts. The degree to which women pastors are integrated into the church and provide leadership responsibilities commensurate with their skills is something that still must be determined. In many instances, society still holds males in higher respect than women (Pillay 2017). This demonstrates a need for fundamental shifts in attitudes and perceptions regarding the ordination of women at the grassroots level. Research on women in ministry in Zimbabwe found that women are not allowed to participate in important decisions or national prayer gatherings. This highlights the fact that more work needs to be done to integrate women into the Christian community (Mupangwa and Chirongoma 2020). While this topic has not been widely examined in Malawi, the information offered above suggests that women in Malawi are more likely to have challenges in carrying out their responsibilities due to the prevalence of patriarchal cultures that give males priority over women.

In a study of the Nkhoma Synod, Nyirenda writes that “women are excluded in Nkhoma Synod in that they are not permitted to serve as church pastors, in accordance with biblical patriarchy”.

Secondly, she argues that women are not provided with theological training (Nyirenda 2013). According to studies, the church does not employ women in leadership roles. Isabel Phiri notes that the exclusion of women may be traced back to the mission era, in addition to the fact that African society privileges men at the expense of women (Phiri 2000). Despite advancements in the ordination of women, women remain on the periphery of power and influence in the church, as indicated by these findings. Similar to Manda, African women in the church hold positions but remain on the periphery of power and influence. This suggests that women must be innovative and develop ways of making an impact in the church and society despite their marginality.

Regarding the Presbyterian Church, research demonstrates that the general assembly’s authority over the synods is restricted (Munyenyebe & Hofmeyr 2016). Women’s representation in the general assembly may not be sufficient to bring about the necessary change. The reform must begin in the local church and spread throughout the community. The women’s guild is a wonderful place to start if you want to exert power within the church. However, the women’s guild is not a free space for women because a male is designated to coordinate between the church and the women’s guild (Nyirenda 2013). According to Angela Nyirenda, the male representative is “supposed to be a spectator and a coordinator between *Chigwirisano cha Amai* and the session but he impacts *Chigwirisano cha Amai*’s decision-making [sic]”.

When women arrange *Chigwirisano cha Amai* (Women’s Guild) conferences and other events, the male church pastor serves as the keynote speaker (Nyirenda

2013). Reminiscent of medieval beguines and the male hagiographers who censored their writings.

In this area, women must begin to exercise power and authority to bring about significant changes in the church. Manda's marginalisation and historical obscurity should inspire women to negotiate improvements for all women and create the groundwork for future generations. In this way, we grant power to marginalised women, our ancestors and those living in our communities. This could be accomplished through resistance and discourse over the need for change. In prior debates on women's ordination and the admission of women in leadership positions, however, women who took this stance were labelled "fundamentalists" (Kanjaye 1999).

Conclusion

This chapter has observed that African patriarchy values determine church practices and as a result, women have been excluded from ordination and leadership positions. It has also been observed that in churches where women are ordained as pastors, the views of the communities favour male pastors over women and are positive towards them. This situation offers a moment for reflection and analysis regarding the well-being of women in the church, especially given that from the time of Manda to the present day, some churches exclude women from positions of leadership. This chapter, in its limited ways, expands our knowledge of Manda and offers an alternative look at her supposed silence and importance in church and society. Although she has not written as much as Isabel Apawo Phiri and Fulata Moyo, her life has become a yardstick for measuring women's progress in church and society. She beckons us from the grave and questions the foundations we stand on.

Bibliography

- Dubbey, J. and Banda, RN *Women of Bible and Culture: Baptist Convention Women in Southern Malawi*. Zomba: Kachere Series, 2005.
- Fiedler, R.N. *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 1989–2007*. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017.
- Ghosh, D. "Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalisation?" *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 737–755.
- Kanjaye, H. "Religion-Malawi: Church Softens Stand on Ordination of Women." *Inter Press Service*, December 17, 1999. <https://www.ipsnews.net/1999/12/religion-malawi-church-softens-stand-on-ordination-of-women/>.
- McCracken, J. *A History of Malawi, 1855–1966*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012.
- Mombo, E. "The Ordination of Women in Africa: A Historical Perspective." In *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, edited by Ian Jones, Kirsty Thorpe, and Janet Wootton, 123–143. London: T&T Clark, 2008.

- Munyenyenbe, R.G., and Hofmeyr, J.W. "Lofty but Not Powerful: A Critical Analysis of the Position of the General Assembly in the Union of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Malawi)." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 3 (2016): 1–21.
- Mupangwa, T. and Chirongoma, S. "The Challenges of Being a Female Pastor: A Case of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (2020): a5838.
- Nyirenda, A.K. "Women's Voice in Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP): A Critical Evaluation Especially with Nkhoma Synod." Master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.
- Obia, C. "A Re-Appraisal of the Role of Women in Church Missions in Africa." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 27 (2018): 48–63.
- Phiri, I.A. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: CLAIM, 1997.
- . "African Women in Mission: Two Case Studies from Malawi." *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 28, no. 2–3 (2000): 267–293.
- . "African Women's Theologies in the New Millennium." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 61 (2004): 16–24.
- Pillay, M.N. "Women, Priests and the Anglican Church in Southern Africa: Reformation of Holy Hierarchies." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): a4574.

Chapter 37

REVEREND JULIET MWANANYIKA MULELA SYANYEUKA MATEMBO: THE MIGHTY MATRIARCH IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA

Helen Mwenya Chisanga

Introduction

‘You will Fail, You Young Ministers’

The chapter aims to trace the life story of Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo who holds the distinction of being one of the initial four Zambian female clergy within the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). Notably, she stands as the second female to undergo training at the United Church of Zambia’s Mindolo Theological College, now known as the United Church of Zambia University (UCZU). Within this chapter, I delve into the various facets of Juliet Matembo’s identity, encompassing her theological and educational journey, her role as a mentor, her participation in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the profound impact that the Circle has had on her life, work and ministry.

By centering on Juliet Matembo as a prominent figure within the Circle, this chapter endeavours to illustrate her as an individual of remarkable integrity and professionalism, evident in all aspects of her life, work and ministry. Characterised by her unwavering commitment to her faith, Juliet Matembo courageously confronted patriarchal structures, advocating tirelessly for the advancement of women’s rights and justice. Through a blend of library research and personal interviews conducted with Juliet Matembo on Wednesday, 1 February, 2023, this chapter seeks to celebrate her as a Reverend Zambian Matriarch. Moreover, it serves as an encouragement to emerging female clergy, urging them to emulate Matembo’s grace, strength and determination in their own endeavours.

Methodology

This chapter uses storytelling to frame Matembo's life experiences with the Circle and the church. Phiri, Govinden and Nadar (2002, 6) advocate that storytelling methodology "shapes and reshapes our identity, recasting the images we have of ourselves as women".

Employing a storytelling methodology rooted in African tradition, this narrative framework enables individuals to craft and redefine their identities, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-determination. Through the art of storytelling, African women navigate their personal journeys, shaping and reshaping themselves according to narratives that resonate with other experiences and aspirations. This approach honours the rich cultural heritage of African storytelling, which has long served as a means of self-expression, community cohesion and collective memory. By embracing this methodology, we embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and empowerment, reclaiming agency over our narratives and identities. According to Adriaan Van Klinken (2018, 217), "storytelling is not only a method for developing a culturally relevant theology but is also politically significant as it allows for the foregrounding of perspectives and experiences of people and communities who are otherwise not part of the theological discourse. Storytelling therefore grants people epistemological privilege".

Incorporating storytelling into this biography is not only a deliberate methodological choice but also a reflection of its significance within African Women's Theology. Storytelling serves as a powerful means of communication, capable of resonating with a diverse audience not only in Zambia but across the African continent. By weaving narratives into the fabric of this biography, we tap into the rich tradition of oral history and cultural expression that is deeply ingrained within African societies. This approach not only allows for the conveyance of information but also facilitates a deeper understanding and engagement with the subject matter, making it accessible and relatable to a broad spectrum of individuals. As such, storytelling becomes a conduit through which the essence of African Women's Theology can be conveyed and appreciated by audiences far and wide. I begin with a discussion on who Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo is. Additionally, face-to-face interviews with Juliet were conducted at her home.

Who is Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo?

Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo was born on 2 August 1961 in Chief Mwemba, Kachindu Mission in Southern Province. Her full names are Juliet Mwananyika meaning 'Child of the Nation' which is befitting her travelling around the world. Mulele originated from the wife of the traditional chief in Siavonga District. Mulela means "taking care of and nurturing others", which also describes her character.

Matembo's father, Mr Bomba Syanyeuka, was a clinician and a medical assistant. Her mother, Edith Syanyeuka, was a full-time housewife and cared for her husband and family. Edith was very hard-working, responsible and independent and always spoke her mind. She instilled this same attribute in her daughter, Reverend. Juliet Matembo. At the time I went to interview her, I found Juliet's mother, Edith who is still strong. Juliet is taking care of her mother. Edith came to greet us in the lounge where we had our interview.

Juliet Matembo's parents were Christians, born, raised and married in the Methodist Church, which later became the United Church of Zambia. Juliet Matembo notes that her mother was far more committed to church than her father who was reluctant most of the time (Matembo 2023).

Educational and Theological Journey

Matembo embarked on her educational journey at Mwembe Primary School before transitioning to Shungu Primary School in Gwembe. Subsequently, she pursued her secondary education at St. Joseph's Secondary School in Livingstone. Upon completing her Form Five, equivalent to Grade 12, she fulfilled a mandatory three-month service with the Zambia National Service, a prerequisite during the Kaunda regime for individuals seeking college enrolment or employment. The Zambia National Service aimed to equip citizens with skills for self-sustainability and self-reliance, similar to the Nigerian Youth Service and typically lasted for a duration of 20 months. Notably, Matembo's intake marked the final recruitment phase for the Zambia National Service, with subsequent intakes being phased out after a three-month period.

Following her service with the Zambia National Service, Matembo enrolled in an untrained teachers' course, a programme implemented due to the limited availability of training institutes between 1970 and 1985. This course provided partial teacher training, wherein participants observed professional teachers' practices and subsequently received untrained teaching certificates. Despite her participation, Matembo expressed dissatisfaction with the untrained teachers' course, noting its discontinuation as a positive development for Zambia's educational system.

Theological Journey

Matembo's love for attending church stemmed from her mother, a devout woman whose deep faith greatly influenced her. Regularly accompanying her mother to church, Matembo was exposed to the fervent worship of God, fostering within her the recognition of a divine presence that safeguards every individual on earth.

Reflecting on her upbringing, she notes the absence of ordained female ministers within her church during her formative years. She recalls that during the years spanning from 1978–1980, the issue of ordination for women was not prominently

discussed and aspiring female ministers often found themselves seeking inspiration from older women within their communities (Interview with Juliet, 1 February 2023). Matembo acknowledges the scarcity of role models for women pursuing ministry during the period from 1970–1980, highlighting the challenges she faced in pursuing her own calling to the ministry. Matembo:

My father did not want me to go into ministry. He declined to assist me financially because he wanted me to go into nursing because ministry was meant for elderly people. But my mother encouraged me to do what my heart desired. Because of this, I sponsored myself with the money I earned in my untrained teacher's job. My father later sponsored me in the final year after seeing that I was indeed committed and serious in my ministerial studies (Matembo 2023).

In 1982, Matembo joined the theological college in Kitwe. She reported as follow:

The environment at the theological college was not friendly enough due to the gap that was there being the youngest and the only female student with one female member of staff (Interview with Juliet, 1 February 2023).

Matembo encountered difficulties upon her enrolment at the college, as she found herself in a unique situation as the sole female student. The only other female student had departed five years prior, leaving Juliet in a predicament wherein the institution was unable to provide her with suitable accommodation alongside male students. She was therefore forced to temporarily stay at Kitwe Teachers Training College in Mrs Florence Mabuluki's house. Matembo still fondly refers to Florence as her mother. Initially, she was the second female to be trained at Mindolo Theological College, which is currently the United Church of Zambia University. The first was Reverend Violet Sampa Bredt who was later trained in Australia. Then there was Reverend Esther Milandu Mundemba and they were joined by Reverend Juliet Matembo who became the third female at the college. A year later, the three females were joined by Reverend Dr Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. With all these women standing by her side, Matembo was encouraged not to give up but to forge ahead. She points out that she was mentored by two senior female ministers who were trained before. These female ministers are Reverend Violet Sampa Bredt and Reverend Ester Milandu Mundemba.

Matembo went on to pursue her undergraduate degree at the University of Pretoria under the mentorship of Professor Shuman. She later furthered her studies by pursuing a master's degree in the Netherlands. She also pursued a certificate in educational methodology at Luanshya Technology, Vocation Training College in Zambia. It was in South Africa that she registered for doctoral studies but did not continue. The reasons for not continuing with her PhD studies were that her husband died and her son was pursuing his university education. She had received a lot of pressure from the family as she had the responsibility to take care of her parents and elder sister. She decided to take up the pastoral charge of the congregation. The PhD in this case was meant to be used to lecture at the United

Church of Zambia University (UCZU). Professor Shuman was willing to offer her a scholarship, however, Matembo did not want to go into details of how frustrating the church policy was at that time. She expressed herself as follows

I decided not to continue. I was advised that pursuing my PhD would mean that I was going to remain at the United Church of Zambia University and be deprived of the Pastoral charge of any congregation...and you know Mwenya, what that means, eh? (*smiling*). I will not go into details on this issue' (Matembo 2023).

Marriage and Family

Juliet married Reverend Paul Matembo in 1987. Paul was a soft-spoken and humble man. By the time of their marriage, Paul was her junior in college by a year. Juliet and Paul had three children. The couple pursued academic careers as they mutually enjoyed their marital relationship. Unfortunately, the Matembos lost two of their children in their prime age. Sadly, Paul also passed away in July 2012.

It is worth noting that Reverend Juliet Matembo was the first female minister to get married to a fellow minister. She recalls that,

you know what, the old constitution of the United Church of Zambia conceived that, if a male and a female minister gets married, only one minister was entitled to the transport and other allowances (Matembo 2023).

So, in this regard, it was only one minister who was supposed to receive the allowances. At that time, the General Secretary was the late Reverend Joel Chisanga. Reverend Chisanga found it difficult to make appropriate decisions about who could receive the allowances between Juliet and Paul. This prompted the late Reverend Joel Chisanga (General Secretary) to revise the constitution so that it suited the interests of the other ministers who would find themselves in similar situations.

Career

Not much has been spoken about Matembo's contributions in terms of her being the first black and longest full-time serving matriarch at the Mindolo Theological College while Reverend Ellen Mulenga was a part-time lecturer. Even in her fight against many injustices against female student ministers, her efforts have not been recorded or heard by people. She laments that many African women who stood beside African men who fought for Africa's freedom, have not been mentioned in writing. Their works and voices have been silenced. Writing from the Zambian context, Ziwa (2022, 162) highlights the silent, yet powerful attitudes and practices of the late Mama Betty Kaunda. Ziwa (2022, 162) observes that the late Mama Betty Kaunda, the wife of the first President of Zambia, the late Dr Kenneth Kaunda, contributed towards Zambia's independence both as a politician

and as a church/Christian woman. According to Ziwa (2022, 162), “even though women contributed significantly to the fight for the freedom of African nations, the political public space says little or nothing about the contribution of women freedom fighters, demonstrating the gendered nature of the political public space”.

Ziwa does not appreciate the silence of the political public space concerning the contribution of African women freedom fighters. She sees this as one of the reasons the church is also silent among many experiences of women. When asked how her experience has been at the Theological College, Matembo’s response was as follows:

Hmm, my experience as somebody who has been teaching at the college, of course, I would say I had a good experience so to say, a very good relationship with most of my learners and also a good working relationship with my colleagues. Yah, sometimes things would be hard but generally I would say, it was fine, with the challenges that I went through, it was okay (Matembo February 2023).

Matembo is the longest-serving female member of staff at the Theological College which is now referred to as the United Church of Zambia University (UCZU). One of the things that stands out mostly for her is the way she speaks and confronts situations. Many students referred to her as “The frank talker Iron lady”

Because she is the kind of woman who speaks her mind and confronts situations wisely. During the interview, Juliet was asked to explain the things that make her strong and unique. She said:

(Laughing aloud) What makes me unique is what unsettles many people. People don’t like to see somebody come out, in a truthful, courageous manner. That, they don’t like and it has unsettled a lot of people but unfortunately again, I can’t do much to change that, because that is my personality (Matembo February 2023).

Circle Membership

It is also worth noting that the first Zambia Circle meeting was held in Matembo’s house in 1990, a year after attending the inauguration of the Circle in Ghana. By then Matembo and her husband were staying in Kafue. Juliet, therefore, is one of the founding members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Zambian chapter. The Circle has impacted her way of doing ministry enormously. Juliet’s most defining characteristic is her desire and ability to encourage women to share their experiences so that they learn from each other. Similarly, Dube (2001, 11) informs us that

Circle transformative acts seek to confront all the factors that deny African women and others on the continent their human rights and dignity. Circle transformative acts also seek to clear a space for transformation and space for liberation and power-sharing.

This is the same reason Juliet felt that she could exercise her human rights and dignity when she was among the two women ministers, Reverend Sampa Bredt and Reverend Mundemba. The two women also journeyed with Juliet even as she joined and attended the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Accra, Ghana in 1989. She believes that women have great potential especially if they are not left out of decision-making spaces but invited to participate and receive skills and tools to engage issues of oppression and marginalisation. The following is an extract of the interview with Juliet:

Mwenya: Have you been actively involved in writing and publishing?

Reverend Matembo: Unfortunately, I have not.

Mwenya: What are your major theological views about African women?

Reverend Matembo: Waa...Aam, African women are women with a lot of potential, especially when they are helped to bring out that which is in them but at the same time, when they kind of come across those who hold negative views, concerning different issues in life, they easily slacken and get back.

Mwenya: So, women in most cases if they are helped, I think they can do a lot of things?

Reverend. Matembo: (*counter reacting*). Given the help that they need, they are far much better, in fact, than men, in ministry, in leadership, in so many things, (Matembo 2023).

Being one of the female ministers who attended the inauguration in Ghana in 1989, she learnt of this event from Mercy Oduyoye who was looking for active women who would stand up with their own voice, for other women in the community so that at least people's mindsets could be transformed, especially those who thought there was not much that could come out of women. She was very young at the time of the conference but she realised that women are fighters. At the conference, she met a lot of women from all walks of life, not only from Africa but from all parts of the world. The first Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians gathering was about African women coming from all parts of the world to support fellow women.

Activism

Even though Matembo was not active in publishing and writing, she has been active in the church where she felt that women need much motivation to realise who they really are and what they can do for the church and society, especially in positions of leadership. Juliet used most of her energy motivating and working with women in the church and communities. Instead of writing and publishing, Juliet spent time ministering to women in the communities. She has journeyed with many women and was also sent by the church to reinvigorate the diaconal department which had collapsed. The diaconal department enrolled females who were trained in social work and later ordained as deaconesses. Maybe this is the reason she was sent to

go and revamp the diaconal training at the theological college from 1996–2006. The diaconal department had been dormant for years and yet there were many women who wanted to pursue studies and be ordained as deaconesses. With the help of other women, Juliet managed to re-organise the diaconal department in 1996. I happen to be one of her students at the UCZ Theological College. In her classroom, she made us realise that God is the God of equality. Juliet allowed both female and male students to accept personally that they have been called to ministry and to stand up and challenge all sorts of social and economic injustices.

Conclusion

The chapter has given an account of the history of Juliet Mwananyika Mulela Syanyeuka Matembo. Juliet is one of the first four ordained female clergy in the United Church of Zambia. The chapter has used the African women's story-telling methodology. This methodology reshapes our identities and empowers other women who read our work. It has also assisted the author to bring out Juliet's voice because it is important for the reader to get the meaning out of the interviewee's words. More importantly, face-to-face interviews with Juliet were conducted at her place in Kafue. The chapter outlines that Juliet's husband died and she now lives and looks after her own mother. Juliet's kindness, generosity, motherhood and dedication to ministry and family are evident in that and that she now takes care of her own biological mother. Even though Juliet has not published any Circle papers, she is the matriarch who opened her house to host the first Zambian Circle meeting. Juliet also attended the inauguration of the Circle in Accra-Ghana. She is the longest-serving female minister and lecturer at the United Church of Zambia University and has mentored many female and male ministers into ministry. We salute you, our matriarch!

Notes

- i This is the warning students used to receive from Reverend. Juliet Matembo. It was part of her way of motivating students because she never wanted to see students roaming around doing nothing.
- ii Mwananyika is a Tonga name which means child of the nation.
- iii Mulela is a Tonga name which means somebody who takes care and nurtures others. Tonga is one of the major tribes in the Southern Province of Zambia.
- iv Mrs Florence Mabuluki is married to Reverend Kangwa Mabuluki who is also the Minister of Word and Sacrament in the United Church of Zambia.
- v Please note: The late Reverend. Joel Chisanga is the author's biological father.

Bibliography

Dube, M.W. "Little Girl, Rise Up!" In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by N.J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 3–24. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.

Matembo, M.M.S.. Interview by the author, February 1, 2023, in Kafue, Zambia.

Phiri, I.A., .Govinden, D.B. and Nadar, S. (eds.) *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002.

Van Klinken, A. "Autobiographical Storytelling and African Narrative Queer Theology." *Exchange: Journal of Contemporary Christianities in Context* 47, no. 3 (2018): 211–229.

Ziwa, J.L. "Remembering the Silent Liberationist Political Hero! Mama Betty Kaunda, the Mother of the Nation." In *Chikamoneka: Gender and Empire in Religion and Public Life*, edited by Lilian Siwila, Stephanie Mukuka, and Nelly Mwale, 162–183. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2022.

Chapter 38

WILHELMINA MPINGANA SHIKOMBA: A TRAILBLAZING BEACON OF HOPE

Seipati L. Ngcobo

Introduction

Growing up in a context rife with violence, racism and sexism, Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba was a trailblazer who was constantly pushing boundaries to cultivate a generation inclusive of women leadership in the church and society. Although Shikomba is prominently known as the wife to the late liberation struggle icon, Gaus Shikomba, this article focuses on her own contributions. Thus, her critical role as an educator, the first woman to be ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Namibia (ELCIN) and a courageous servant of the people while living under the apartheid regime will be focal points. The article looks back to Shikomba's experience at the first Circle meeting and its implications for her life, ministry and many women in Africa. Shikomba's faith convictions and exemplary life continue to inspire many women coming after her on the path she has set.

Following a lengthy online search that led me as author to the social media pages of the ELCIN, the author was able to have an opportunity to be in conversation with the matriarch, *Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba*. This paper is a biographical narration of the life and ministry of Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba proceeding from that conversation. In this conversation, the matriarch shares key points in her life, that led her to be the trailblazing woman of hope that she continues to be today (Shikomba 2023).

Wilhelmina: The Daughter

On 21 April 1942, the Amweelo family welcomed a baby girl in the Namibian village of Otuwala and named her Wilhelmina Mpingana. Her name, Mpingana, tells a story about a girl child who had come into the world after her sibling had passed on. Lovingly raised by her parents along with five others, Mama Wilhelmina (one of the ways she preferred to be called) would later make her mark in the world

as a trailblazer, creating a path for others who would come after her. Wilhelmina was born and raised in a time when Namibia was still rife with violence. However, she holds her childhood with such fondness of memory as she recalls the joys of being raised in a rural community. Her parents were instrumental in her faith journey, teaching her from a young age the significance of belonging to a faith community. Hence just eight days after she was born, Wilhelmina was baptised in the ELCIN. It was in her own home that Wilhelmina developed her faith journey. She developed a love for reading which arose from being taught by her mother the importance of reading the Bible; she learnt the discipline of having a prayer life by learning from her mother how to pray (Shikomba 2023).

Early Beginnings

When Wilhelmina completed her schooling, something rare for girls at the time, she pursued a teaching career, enrolling in a teacher's training college in 1962 and completing her teacher's course in 1965. In 1966, she started her teaching career in a primary school. During her time as a teacher there, the Dean she referred to as *Tate*, meaning father, approached her asking if she would want to study theology. This was a surprise to her because the ELCIN was still not ordaining women in the 1960s and Theology was normally reserved for men. She enquired if it was even a possibility for her, as a woman, to study Theology. *Tate* said to her that there would come a time when women can study Theology just like men. With that in mind, she consented to study Theology. It was only in 1968 that she was enrolled to study for a Diploma in Theology at the Otjimbingwe Theological School with the support of the Dean and Church Council (Shikomba 2023).

The Teacher and Theologian

The classroom at the Theological School was quite different to when Wilhelmina studied teaching. The majority of the students were male. However, it was in the same classroom that she would meet the only other female student pursuing Theology at the time and they both had the name Mpingana in common. As the only two female students, they worked hand in hand, supporting each other in their studies and forming a close friendship. This would later give them strength in starting a new trail towards women's ordination in ELCIN as the first women to study Theology. Wilhelmina did not let statements of disqualification and invalidation by her male counterparts dissuade her from continuing with her studies until completion in 1971. Upon her graduation, some of her fellow male graduates were ordained as pastors in the ELCIN. However, she and her fellow female graduates were excluded from ordination because the church had not passed the resolution in favour of the ordination of women. Wilhelmina was made theologian and evangelist in the church and continued being an educator at Engela Parish

Institute where women and men were trained to become evangelists, deacons and church workers (Shikomba 2023).

The Pursuit of Liberation

Her time as a teacher at Engela Parish Institute proved to be difficult and life-threatening. Due to its location next to the border dividing Angola and Namibia, the Engela Parish Institute was constantly exposed to foot soldiers who were coming from different sides of the racial struggle. Some soldiers were political freedom fighters who intended to overthrow a racist government. Other soldiers, referred to as the *makakunyas*, were in the racist government's employ and their sole purpose was eliminating freedom fighters and terrorising those who supported them. When these soldiers who were at different camps crossed the border into Namibia, they would go to Engela Parish Institute and Wilhelmina recalls how she and her colleagues would give them food, with uncertainty if they were feeding a freedom fighter, a spy or a *makakunya* (Shikomba 2023).

Wilhelmina believed in the liberation of Namibians from racial oppression. When faced with the decision to cross the border with other freedom fighters in pursuit of liberation, she made the difficult decision to stay in Namibia. Three of her siblings had already gone into exile for military training to overthrow the government. However, she chose to stay because she realised it would be too much for her parents to bear should she also make the decision to go into exile. She promised her parents that she would never leave but would make every attempt to see them at least once a week while she worked at Engela Parish Institute. Wilhelmina was not oblivious to the possible dangers of making this decision. One day, the *makakunyas* raided her parents' home, searching for her siblings. Even when danger was looming in her own home with the *makakunyas*' visit, she was faithful to her commitment to her parents, driving for 60 kilometres every weekend to see them. In reference to that time in her life, she said "It was a hard time. You didn't know whether tomorrow you'd live or you'd die" (Shikomba 2023).

She stayed in Namibia and used education as her weapon of choice to rise against racism. In pursuit of liberating Namibians, Wilhelmina made her own contribution towards the liberation of her people by continuing to teach her students Theology and conscientising them of the history of the Namibian people pre-colonisation (Shikomba 2023).

A Trailblazer and Hope Bearer

After years of serving as a theologian in the church, ELCIN recognised Wilhelmina's immense value and contribution as a gifted educator. In 1994, ELCIN decided to send her to further her theological studies at the University of Zimbabwe. She enrolled for a BA Degree in Theology but was soon exposed to yet another great challenge in her life: She saw many young people dying during the AIDS

pandemic. By this time, she was a new mother to a baby girl, Ndilipo. She was also newly married to the freedom fighter, Gaus Shikomba, a man who had been previously imprisoned on South Africa's infamous Robben Island where political activists were incarcerated. Seeking to be closer to home, she made the decision to return to Namibia where she completed her degree in theology at the University of Namibia, Windhoek (Shikomba 2023).

In 1991, ELCIN passed the resolution for ordination of women and Wilhelmina was one of the first women to be ordained as a pastor in ELCIN. Sadly, her fellow sister with whom she had started this journey as the first two women to study theology in ELCIN died before she could be ordained as a pastor in the church. Loss of loved ones has been a heartsore part of her journey as many of her female counterparts died in waiting. However, Wilhelmina carries her fellow sisters as an instrumental part of her journey and that of the church and community (Shikomba 2023).

Wilhelmina recognises that men's way of thinking changed because they realised that women are also called to the ministry just like men. Although not all of her colleagues embraced them as fellow pastors, some did support them with the understanding that "there is neither male nor female" (King James Bible 1769/2017; Gal. 3:28).

In reference to the harsh remarks, some of her male colleagues said in rejection of their calling as women pastors, Wilhelmina says:

Those words of men, they did nothing for us, they didn't go inside us! Their words actually gave us power. Now we are many women, too many to count, even more than the men pastors. Some women are now deans but we still have a low number of women bishops. But it will come. I have faith (Shikomba 2023).

A Matriarch of Impact

Wilhelmina devoted her time and ministry to serving in the church and was elected as a women's leader in ELCIN, which meant she held the responsibility to lead, serve, care for and develop women in the different churches within ELCIN. This was an immense responsibility which she carried with great joy. In her role as a women's leader in the church, she was exposed to many spaces where she could meet other women and female pastors. She was amazed when she went to Ghana for the first Circle meeting. "It was a big thing for me", she said.

Women from different walks of life were welcomed to this meeting and she remembers distinctly a Ghanaian pastor, Mercy Oduyoye, who she thought was a powerful writer and inspirational speaker. She was very happy to see her. Although she had encountered many disappointments in her journey as a woman pastor as she lived to experience unjust governance and the negation of women in the church.

The first Circle meeting inspired her to go back to Namibia and inspire other women. She saw that women in her own country were falling behind because

women were pushing ahead in the world, leading in different spheres of the community and educating themselves among themselves. Women taught other women to read and write and support each other in studying further. The first meeting affirmed what she already believed, namely, that through education, much could be achieved and done by the women in her own country. This was her great take-away from that first Circle Meeting. Working alongside other women in the church and community, Wilhelmina inspired others with the intention to lead them forward, working with others to educate women in cooking, knitting, agriculture and many other skills (Shikomba 2023).

Conclusion

Today, Wilhelmina is most proud about being a pastor, not necessarily for herself but for the many other women who look up to her in the community and the various churches. Through the courage she believes God gave to her, what started as a journey of only two women within the ELCIN, became greater than church denominations. She is proud that as a Circle pioneer, she was able to work alongside others in bringing about change in the lives of her people. Wilhelmina remains ever grateful for the role of the Circle in inspiring and affirming her in her work as a trailblazer in the church and community. The life of Wilhelmina is inspirational and signifies the essence of what can be attained when women come together to forge a path ahead for themselves and others. She will be a celebrated circle matriarch for how she allowed others to pour into her and how she poured into others the hope and courage that she had also received.

Bibliography

King James Bible. 1769/2017. *King James Bible Online*. <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>.
Shikomba, W.M. Interview by Seipati L. Ngcobo, January 27, 2023, via Zoom.

PART IV

WEST AFRICAN FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs

Chapter 39

SR ROSEMARY N EDET: A LEGACY FOR A NEW ROLE AND NEW CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN WOMEN

Estelle Sogbou

Introduction

Sr Rosemary Edet HHJC was one of the first African Catholic Feminist nuns who died four years after the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth the Circle, was formed. She was one of the 70 women who were at the Circle's launch in 1989. As a biblical theologian, she articulated African traditions and biblical interpretation. Despite her very brief legacy as a member of the Circle, Sr Rosemary had reflected on the theology of inculturation, aiming to restore the position of women, particularly African women, within Christianity and traditional Nigerian culture.

Edet thus opened a path for other religious women in African feminist theology. This chapter presents how as a Roman Catholic nun and founding member of the Circle, advocated for a positive and authentic place for women in traditional settings. This, in turn, was also a strategy to help to define the place and the role of women in the Church, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. Using her publications as a basis, the efforts of Sr Rosemary in constructing dialogue between the Bible and the Nigerian cultural contexts will be showcased.

Biography and Educational Training

Nkoyo Edet was born on 23 October 1935 to the family of Chief Edet Akpan Udo of Ifa Ikot Okpon. This was in the then Uyo Division which is currently known as Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. Her mother was Theresa Ansa Odo of Ikot Ansa, Calabar in Cross River State. The life of Sr Edet started in an ecumenical environment. Her father was an ardent Methodist while her mother was an ardent Catholic. Nkoyo was baptised and raised in the Methodist faith.

In 1949, she was admitted into a two-year Modern Secondary School at Calabar Road Convent where she first experienced life in a boarding school. The school

was managed by the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus sisters. It was here that she was converted and received into the Catholic faith and given the name Rosemary as her baptismal name. According to Edet, it was at this time that her desire for the religious vocation began but she kept it to herself. After her two-year study in the Modern Secondary School at Calabar Road Convent, she proceeded to the Teachers' Training College (TTC) in Ifuho, Ikot Ekpene (1951–1954) (Sogbou 2023).

After some dispute with her family about her religious call, she joined the Feast of the Conversion of the great Saint Paul on 25 January 1957. She was hooded as a Postulant in the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus and on 15 January 1958, she was admitted into the Novitiate. Even as a novice, in 1959, she was admitted as a teacher to the Teachers' Training College (TTC) Ifuho. Four years later on 15 January 1961, she made her First Profession and took the religious name 'Vincent.' Edet was then known as Sister Mary Vincent Edet. Edet was the subject of posthumous reflection by her spiritual protégé, from which this chapter derives its source material.

Training

After Edet's first Profession in 1961, she was posted first to the P.T.C Anua as a teacher and then in 1962 to Calabar Road Convent. As providence would have it, barely one year after her First Profession, her potential was already noted by her superiors on account of which she was, in 1962 sent to America for further studies. While in the United States of America, she studied at Rosemont College in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. After four years she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Fine Arts and English Literature. Recognised for her academic ability, she was sent to Rome for further training in theological studies. After her studies in Rome and some years as an appointed lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Calabar, she was sent to the Catholic University of America (CUA). Here she obtained a second master's degree in religious studies in 1981 and a doctoral degree in Religious Studies in 1983. It is noteworthy to emphasise the exceptional nature of Edet's academic attainment, particularly within the historical context where women's education was perceived as both pioneering and financially prudent. At this juncture, Edet had already established herself as a trailblazer in her field (Sogbou 2023).

Work History

Upon returning to her responsibilities at the University of Calabar, Edet persisted in her role as an educator, progressing to the position of Senior Lecturer and assuming leadership as Head of Department. She was undergoing evaluation for the esteemed rank of Professor when her life and professional journey were abruptly concluded by illness and subsequent demise (Sogbou 2023).

Maintaining her responsibilities within her religious community, Edet seamlessly balanced her academic pursuits without interruption. She demonstrated unwavering consistency both in her religious commitments and scholarly endeavours, remaining steadfast in her roles as a researcher and educator. From the onset of her career, marked by the completion of her Teachers Grade II qualification, she embraced the vocation of teaching wholeheartedly. Her teaching journey traversed various educational levels, including primary schools in Essene, Ifuho and Calabar, Teachers' Training Colleges in Oron and Ifuho and secondary schools in Marian Hill, Calabar, Ndon Ebom, Edem Ekpata and Eriam. Upon obtaining her PhD, she returned to academia at the University level where she distinguished herself as an exemplary lecturer at the University of Calabar. Renowned for her punctuality and ability to foster collegiality, she is fondly remembered as a bridge-builder among her peers. Professor Godfrey O. Ozumba, presently serving as the Head of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at the University of Calabar and a former student of Edet during his undergraduate studies, recalled her as "a very gentle and meticulous teacher," as noted by Iniobong Udoidem (2011).

Participation in the Formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

During her tenure as a lecturer, Edet embarked on her involvement with the Circle. In the late 1980s, in a concerted effort to amplify women's perspectives within African theology, traditionally dominated by male voices, Mercy Oduyoye sought out women engaged in theological education or serving as clergy. These women were invited to join the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). Consequently, Theresa Okure and Rosemary Edet became the inaugural female members introduced to EATWOT by Oduyoye. As one of the pioneering African women to join EATWOT, Edet contributed to the establishment of the Circle and remained an active member alongside Theresa Okure, both being the first Roman Catholic nuns and trailblazers of the Circle.

The initial international planning committee, as noted by Musimbi Kanyoro (2006, 22), included Dr. Mercy Oduyoye (Ghana), Dr Betty Ekeya (Kenya), Dr Sr Rosemary Edet (Nigeria), Dr Sr Bernadette Mbuy Beya (Zaire), Dr Elizabeth Amoah (Ghana), Dr Brigalia Bam (South Africa) and Musimbi Kanyoro (Kenya). These women are recognised as the co-founding mothers of the Circle with Mercy Oduyoye as the initiator and founding figure. Regrettably, Edet passed away on 1 December 1993, merely four years after the Circle's inception. Nevertheless, her enduring legacy within the Circle persists, serving as an ongoing source of inspiration. Importantly, her scholarly contributions significantly influenced the theological discourse fostered by the Circle, aiming to elevate African women's voices onto global theological platforms and advocating for critical engagement with traditional Nigerian society and culture.

Major Theological Ideas

Edet obtained her doctoral degree in Religious Studies with a dissertation on *The Resilience of Religious Tradition in the Drama of Wole Soyinka and James Ene Henshaw*. Her studies of the religious traditions in the New Testament seemed to have preoccupied her as a New Testament scholar at the University of Calabar. Among the themes in the New Testament studies, one of those that concerned her most was the Pauline notion of community according to Iniobong Udoidem (2011). In her little book, *St. Paul's notion of the Christian Community: The Church*, she not only appropriates the Pauline notion of community but gave an interpretation that is uniquely her own. In the opening paragraph of the Preface to the mentioned book, sister Rosemary Nkoyo Edet stated as follows:

The Christian Community, the Church originated from the assembled group of believers of the Christian Message announced by the disciples of Jesus of whom Paul was the foremost. At first, these believers regarded themselves simply as Jews and those who heard their message also took them for such. But they also regarded themselves as the 'elect of God,' 'the holy people,' and 'the Assembly of God.' This community awareness constituted them into a new people of God, the new Israel and so Paul in his letters addresses these Christian communities as 'saints'—those determined by God's saving act. The elect are therefore first and foremost holy, sanctified hence the holy people of God. (Edet p5).

Edet has published extensively. Among the works authored by Edet, notable publications include 'The Resilience of the Religious Tradition in the Drama of Wole Soyinka and James Ene Henshaw' (1984), an exploration delving into the enduring vitality of religious themes within the dramatic narratives of Wole Soyinka and James Ene Henshaw. Additionally, Edet has contributed significantly to theological scholarship with works such as 'New Testament Studies for Colleges and Universities' (1981), offering comprehensive insights into the scholarly examination of the New Testament within academic settings. Moreover, Edet's scholarship extends to ecclesiastical discourse, as evidenced by 'Men and Women Building the Church in Africa' (1985), which examines the roles and contributions of both genders in the ecclesial context of Africa. Delving further into biblical exegesis, Edet presents 'The Parable of the Ten Maidens' (1988), offering a nuanced analysis of this biblical narrative and its implications within Christian theology.

Furthermore, Edet's scholarly pursuits encompass contemporary reflections on leadership paradigms within the context of the New Testament, exemplified by 'Leadership in the New Testament: Feminist Perspective' (1989), which provides a critical examination of leadership principles through a feminist lens within the Christian tradition. Edet's work contributes to the scholarly discourse surrounding theology, literary analysis, ecclesiastical studies and gender perspectives within religious scholarship. Edet had a positive appreciation of the role of women in church and society. She perceived women as integral participants in religious activities, emphasising their pivotal contributions to communal worship and the

broader societal fabric. Discussing the evolution or devolution of women's roles in religion, whether within traditional African contexts or within Christianity, necessitates an understanding of the historical roles women played in traditional societies. Notably, within African traditional religions, crucial salvific functions such as healing, exorcism, fertility promotion and blessing endeavours were carried out by priestesses and priests. These religious figures underwent formal training under the guidance of a chief priestess or priest associated with their respective deity, like the apprenticeship model observed in Christian ministry. Their vocation, akin to that of Christian clergy, was perceived as a divine calling, demanding strict adherence to religious mandates under penalty of severe consequences (Kasomo 2010, 130).

In this vein, African traditional religions recognised professional women, analogous to ministers, pastors and priests in Christian denominations, who underwent rigorous training for their roles. Edet embraced this positive perspective, evident in her examination of traditional rituals. Notably, she highlighted the birth ritual as a significant moment for women, viewing it as a celebration of life and a demonstration of the intimate connection between God and women as co-creators. (Edet 2005, 27). Thus, Edet's discernment underscores the parallels between traditional African religious practices and Christian beliefs, particularly in acknowledging the central role of women in religious and communal life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sr Edet emerges as a pioneering figure within both religious and academic realms, exemplifying an unwavering commitment to the advancement of women's rights and social justice. Through her scholarly endeavours, she passionately explored the intersection of gender, religion and culture, shedding light on the challenges faced by African and Nigerian women within traditional and Christian contexts. Her profound insights underscored the importance of recognising and valuing the contributions of women within religious practices and communal life.

Despite her untimely passing in 1993, a mere four years after the establishment of the Circle, Sr Edet's enduring legacy continues to resonate within academic circles and beyond. Her dedication to amplifying women's voices and advocating for their empowerment serves as an inspirational beacon for future generations. Through her pioneering research and advocacy, Sr Edet leaves behind a lasting imprint, challenging societal norms and fostering a more inclusive and equitable landscape for women in both religious and secular spheres.

Bibliography

- Edet, R.N. *The Resilience of the Religious Tradition in the Drama of Wole Soyinka and James Ene Henshaw*. Rome: Citta Nuova, 1984.
- . *St. Paul's notion of the Christian Community: The Church*. Nigeria. Year of publication unknown.

- . “Men and Women Building the Church in Africa.” *Voices from the Third World* 8, no. 3 (1985): 78–81.
- . “The Parable of the Ten Maidens: Interpretation.” In *Gospel Parables in African Context*, edited by Justin Ukpog. Port Harcourt: CIWA Publications, 1988.
- . “Leadership in the New Testament: Feminist Perspective.” *Nigerian Journal of Theology* 1, no. 5 (1989).
- . *New Testament Studies for Colleges and Universities*. Lagos: African Heritage Publications, 1991.
- . “Christianity and African Women’s Rituals.” In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 25–39. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005.
- Kanyoro, M. “Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle.” In *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–38. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Kasomo, D. “The Role of Women in the Church in Africa.” *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2, no. 6 (2010): 126–139.
- Sogbou, E. “Sr Rosemary Edet Nkoyo: Shifting New Theological Paradigms for Women in the African Society and African Church.” In *SANKOFA: Liberation Theologies of West African Women (Circle Jubilee Volume 1)*, edited by Seyram Maton Amenyedzi, Yosi Apollos, and Marceline L. Yele, 245–256. 2023.
- Udoidem, I. *The Virtuous Nun: The Legacy of Sister Rosemary Nkoyo Edet, Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus*. Nigeria, 2011.

Chapter 40

PROF. ELIZABETH AMOAH: A BELOVED GRANDMOTHER IN THE ACADEMIA

Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh

Introduction

This chapter seeks to highlight and celebrate the contribution of Prof. Elizabeth Amoah in academia, in the formation and inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth referred to as ‘the Circle’ and to its growth. The narrative surrounding the formation and evolution of the Circle is inexorably intertwined with the invaluable contributions of Professor Amoah. Amoah played a pivotal role during the formative stages of the Circle, engaging actively in its conceptualisation and organisational efforts preceding its official inception. Her remarkable leadership qualities and scholarly acumen not only shaped the trajectory of the Circle but also left an indelible mark on the broader academic landscape.

This paper aims to illuminate the multifaceted endeavours of Amoah within the academic sphere, focusing on her significant involvement with the University community, the Circle and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. By shedding light on her notable achievements and unwavering dedication to duty, this exposition seeks to inspire others to emulate her exemplary lifestyle, particularly in navigating and challenging prevailing gender stereotypes.

A Beloved Grandmother in Academia

Amoah, colloquially dubbed as ‘Grandma’ among her students and peers, played a pivotal role in the establishment, initiation and expansion of the Circle. This organisation has emerged as a prominent advocate for the empowerment of African women, dedicated to unlocking their inherent capabilities for societal advancement. The endearing moniker ‘Grandma’ not only underscores her nurturing demeanour but also underscores her adeptness in fostering academic growth among students from diverse backgrounds and proficiency levels.

Numerous students under her guidance perceive Prof. Amoah as integrating the concept of motherhood prevalent in traditional African contexts into both her academic endeavours and personal life. The epithet ‘Grandma’ has gained traction, gradually superseding her formal name due to its ease of recognition among the University of Ghana student body (Kanyoro 2002, 22–23). This affectionate title not only highlights her nurturing approach but also serves as a convenient identifier for students. Furthermore, her maternal ethos extends to her involvement with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), where she fulfils responsibilities as a panel member tasked with evaluating programmes for accreditation or re-accreditation. During these assessment visits, her interrogative approach was imbued with a corrective philosophy aimed at enhancing programme quality and enriching the educational experience for students enrolled in such programme.

Prof. Amoah holds the distinction of being the first Ghanaian woman to attain a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Religious Studies (Labeodan 2016, 5). Additionally, she occupies the pioneering role as the first female faculty member within the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana. Since commencing her teaching tenure at the department in 1979, Prof. Amoah has seamlessly integrated her academic journey from undergraduate studies to doctoral research, fostering an enduring association with the institution from 1969 to the present.

Among the select individuals contacted by Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the founder of the Circle, during the preliminary stages of its inception, Prof. Amoah played a pivotal role (Kanyoro 2002, 22–23). As part of the inaugural International Committee of Eight, she dedicated extensive efforts towards the preparatory activities preceding the organisation’s landmark launch in 1989. Prof. Amoah’s research focus at the time, centred on religio-cultural identity and creation, positioned her as a formidable ally to Prof. Oduyoye in championing issues pertinent to African women. Despite her absence at the group’s historic inauguration, her substantive contributions and active engagement during preparatory meetings underscore her commitment to the Circle’s vision. It is noteworthy that Prof. Amoah’s interest in gender studies may have been nurtured by the guidance of her mentor, Prof. John Samuel Pobee who not only encouraged her academic pursuits but also facilitated early financial support for the Circle’s initiatives through his affiliations with the World Council of Churches.

Prof. Amoah was a member of the first international planning committee of the Circle. The composition of the committee was as follows: Dr Mercy Oduyoye, Convener (Ghana), Dr Betty Ekeya (Kenya); Dr Sr Rosemary Edet (Nigeria), Dr Sr Bernadette Mbuy Beya (DRC); Dr Elizabeth Amoah (Ghana), Dr Brigalia Bam (South Africa) and Musimbi Kanyoro (Kenya) (Kanyoro 2002, 22; Labeodan 2016, 5). It has been argued that the women who served on the committee could be considered co-founding members while Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye is the progenitor and founding mother (Labeodan 2016, 5). If this is correct, then Prof. Amoah would be referred to as a senior co-founder or senior matriarch of the

Circle because prior to the formation of the committee she had started work with Prof. Oduyoye towards the realisation of the objectives of the group. She was acknowledged in a speech during the receipt of the E. H. Johnson Award by Prof. Oduyoye on Tuesday, 3 June 2008, in Ottawa, Ontario that she has dedicated time and commitment to attaining the vision of the Circle (Oduyoye 2008).

In the formation and development of the Circle from its nascent stages through to the 2000s, she was recognised as one of the co-organisers who facilitated the convergence of women hailing from diverse academic, social, religious and cultural spheres, as elucidated by Maseno (2004, 225–236). The work of the Circle is largely concentrated on “cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics, Women in Religion and Culture, History of Women and Ministries and Theological Education and Formation” (Labeodan 2016, 6).

Prior to the fine-tuning of these objectives and securing funds to build the Women in Religion and Culture Centre at the Trinity Theological Seminary Legon, the Circle was more involved in advocacy and public education. Prof. Amoah was a member of the team that visited various communities and institutions in Ghana for advocacy and public education. Eventually, the public education fora began to produce papers that were publishable as academic materials/works. She then collaborated with Prof. Oduyoye and other experienced academics of the Circle to serve as editors for many of the publications by the Circle. Persons who joined the Circle in recent times see her as one of the key editors of critical publications by the Circle (Fiedler 2017).

Prof. Amoah’s editorial work for the Circle made her play a mentoring role to young scholars who wished to publish. Through editorial works for the Circle, she has mentored many women theologians in the field of religion and culture. Some of the works she edited for the Circle include *Divine Empowerment of Women in Africa’s Complex Reality* (2001) and *Poems of Mercy Amba Oduyoye* (2001 & 2004). The works she co-edited include *Cultural Practices and HIV/AIDS: African Women’s Voice* (2001) and *People of Faith and the Challenge of HIV/AIDS* (2005). Given Amoah’s steadfast dedication to the establishment and advancement of the Circle, her pivotal role as a foundational figure within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is undeniable. Revered as an esteemed matriarch, her status extends even further, earning her endearing recognition akin to that of a cherished grandmother within the Circle’s community.

Bibliography

- Amoah, E. (ed.) *Divine Empowerment of Women in Africa's Complex Reality*. Accra North: The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 2001a.
- Amoah, E. (ed.) *Poems of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*. Accra North: The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 2001b.
- Amoah, E., Akintunde, D and Akoto, D. *Cultural Practices & HIV/AIDS: African Women's Voice*. Accra North: The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 2005.
- Fiedler, R.N. *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (1989–2017)*. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. "Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle." In *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–42. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.
- Labeodan, H.A. "Revisiting the Legacy of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Today: A Lesson in Strength and Perseverance." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 2 (2016): 1–6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i2.1586>.
- Maseno, L. "Gendering Inculturation in Africa: A Discussion of Three African Women Theologians' Entry into the Inculturation Scene." *Norsk Tidsskrift for Misjon* 4, no. 2 (2004): 225–236.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Address to the E.H. Johnson Award Luncheon." Speech, Ottawa, Ontario, June 3, 2008.
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Amoah, E. (eds.) *People of Faith and the Challenge of HIV/AIDS*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 2005.
- "Professor Elizabeth Amoah." *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*. Accessed April 18, 2023. <https://dacb.org/search.html>

Chapter 41

THERESA A.D. ACOLASTE: THE PASSIONATE BELIEVER

Grace Anning

Introduction

A confluence of African Women Theologians hailing from diverse nations across the continent coalesced into the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle) during a seminal gathering at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana, in 1989. This assembly marked the culmination of a myriad of initiatives pursued across various centres. The genesis of the Circle emanated from the collective aspirations of African women to address the pressing issues and imperatives confronting the continent. As the Circle reconvenes in its original configuration at the Sankofa 2024 Conference, it behoves the organisation to introspect on the foundational figures, particularly the pioneering matriarchs, whose unwavering dedication and service have elevated the banner of African religious women. This chapter endeavours to elucidate the life and contributions of Theresa Acolaste, a prominent participant in this epochal gathering. Acolaste, born on 14 November 1933 in Penye, Ketu North Districts, emerged as a prominent figure due to her fervent commitment to the expansion of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, culminating in her appointment as the Dean of Field Workers. Renowned for her tireless missionary zeal and advocacy for voluntary service, Acolaste identified the enhancement of members' livelihoods as a paramount concern. Thus, this chapter seeks to offer a biographical exposition of Acolaste's involvement with the Circle, shedding light on her impactful engagements and enduring legacy.

Brief Background and Upbringing

Acolaste was born at Penye in the Ketu North Districts, on 14 November 1933. Her parents, Diana Afiwor Arthur-Tay Gboloh and Jerome Kofi Gboloh are deceased for a considerable duration. She is the eldest of eight children (six girls and two boys). Acolaste spent her formative years with her grandparents Rev.

and Mrs Godwin Kofi Arthur-Tay. Being the first grandchild of the Gbologah and Arthur Tay families, she enjoyed the tender loving care of both families. She was fortunate to grow up in the company of her young aunties who were then in their teens and as a result, this influenced her rapid development and maturity, years beyond her peers (Dogbe 2022).

Educational Training

Acolaste commenced her early academic pursuits at the AME Zion Primary School in Penye, completing her Standard 3 education in 1945. Subsequently, in 1946, she enrolled at the OLA Convent in Ho to further her middle school education. However, owing to recurrent health issues, she relocated to Keta, where, with the assistance of her aunt, Florence Kosiwor Arthur-Tay, she gained admission to the EP Girls School in 1947. In 1950, Acolaste successfully obtained her Standard 7 certificate after diligent preparation, prompting her return to Penye to aid her mother in her commercial endeavours and acquire essential homemaking skills. In a pivotal turn of events in 1952, she was appointed as a pupil-teacher at the AME Zion School in Penye by Reverend Isaac Cole, the General Manager of AME Zion Schools at the time. This opportunity arose due to her astute demeanour and commendable work ethic. During a visit to Penye, hosted by Reverend Godwin Kofi Arthur-Tay, the Local Manager of AME Zion School Penye, Reverend Cole was notably impressed by Acolaste's professional demeanour, even at her youthful age. Recognising her innate leadership attributes as advantageous to the school's mission, he facilitated her placement as a teacher at the AME Zion School in Penye (Dogbe 2022).

Work History

Following her tenure at Penye AME Zion Primary School, Acolaste, displaying her characteristic diligence, resolved to cement teaching as her vocation. Demonstrating her proactive approach, she pursued further educational attainment to bolster her competencies. Thus, spanning the years 1957–1958, she underwent training at St. Francis Teachers Training College in Hohoe. Upon completion of her training in 1958, she was reassigned to her alma mater, AME Zion School Primary School, where she dedicated two additional years to teaching. Undeterred in her quest for personal and professional development, Acolaste pursued advanced studies at Aburi Teachers Training College between 1960 and 1961. Following the culmination of her training, she received a new posting to an AME Zion School, this time to Mamprobi in Accra, in 1961. Mamprobi served as the locus of her teaching career for several years, during which she ascended the ranks from a class teacher to a headteacher, ultimately assuming the role of a regional school manager until her voluntary retirement in 1984 (Dogbe 2022).

Participation in the Circle Formation

Acolaste, imbued with a steadfast commitment to education as her calling and a fervent advocacy for the advancement of women, was intrinsically motivated to join the Circle. Anchoring her faith in God and driven by her passion for religious service, she received an invitation to participate in the formation of the Circle. Throughout her life, she dedicated herself to supporting the Circle's initiatives, engaging in diverse missions and programmes both locally and internationally. Notably, she was an active participant in the inaugural meeting of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, convened at Trinity College in Legon, Accra, Ghana, in 1989 (Dogbe 2022).

Major Theological ideas

As a Missionary Field Worker, Acolaste worked to improve the lot of the Missionary Society. She was a champion of voluntary work and she encouraged and assisted Circle members to develop their voluntary spirit to support special Missionary projects. To formalise these efforts, she was instrumental in creating the Agape Sisters, a fraternity of voluntary women who used their time and resources in the establishment and running of institutions for missionary societies. Acolaste also believed in promoting the development of technical skills and together with fellow missionaries supported the Vocational Training Institute at Klikor. At the kindergarten at Zion-College Anologa, she established mutual funds to assist society members in need and organised Game Vertal Funds and a piggery as income-generating projects for the missionary society. Besides ensuring that the Societies programmes impacted lives she also focused part of her efforts on strengthening the visibility of the Missionary Society's brand locally. In line with this, she was instrumental in launching two missionary clothes for the Society in the East Ghana Conference and for the Western West African Episcopal districts, respectively (Dogbe 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life and career of Acolaste exemplify dedication, resilience and a profound commitment to education, religious service and the advancement of women. Beginning her academic journey at the AME Zion Primary School in Penye and culminating in her ascension to the role of a regional school manager, Acolaste's trajectory underscores her unwavering pursuit of personal and professional growth. Her active involvement in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians attests to her fervent advocacy for women's empowerment within religious and academic spheres. Furthermore, her role as a missionary field worker and her initiatives to promote voluntary service and technical skills development highlight her enduring impact on the Missionary Society and broader community welfare. Acolaste Theresa's legacy serves as a testament to the

transformative power of dedication, compassion and unwavering faith in driving positive change in society.

Bibliography

Dogbe, H.K.D. (Bishop Dr. Hilliard K. D. Dogbe, Presiding Bishop of A.M.E. Zion Church Western West Africa). Interview by Grace Anning. 1 December 2022.

Chapter 42

THE STORY OF PROFESSOR ESTHER ACOLASTE: A CIRCLE PIONEER

Dorothy BEA (Abutiate) Akoto

Introduction

The initiative of building on a history of reflection, contextual engagement and advocacy related to gender and women's experiences in religious and theological contexts, is laudable and probably long overdue. It is also laudable that a cross-section of our global village, including scholars, clergy, activists, students and practitioners, to name a few, could be invited to reflect on the pioneering works of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter, the Circle) matriarchs. A lot appears to have happened in the three decades since the inauguration of the Circle, in 1989 at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon Ghana. As we approach the commemoration of this significant milestone in 2024, set to occur at the original venue of inception, it is paramount to recognise that the essential groundwork for this endeavour has been laid. Therefore, it is imperative to underscore the completion of this pivotal publication, which serves as a poignant documentation of our collective journey—a manifestation of 'Sankofa,' symbolising a return to our origins to retrieve invaluable insights and experiences that have hitherto been overlooked or neglected. First of all, we doff our hats to our founding Mother 'Matriarch' Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye whose selfless and tireless efforts birthed the Circle and have continued to be its mainstay.

This chapter is a reflection on the worthwhile theological journey of one of the founding matriarchs of the Circle in the person of Rev. Professor Esther Acolatse. I will highlight the birth and education, major theological thrust/research interest generated by Acolatse, through her work history, her encounter with Oduyoye, her participation in the Circle, her professional memberships and affiliations and a selected list of her publications. The chapter will conclude with a way forward with some questions and suggestions.

Birth and Education

Rev. Professor Esther Acolatse was born on 24 May 1956 in Accra Ghana, West Africa where she had her earliest education. She is of Anlo descent. Her paternal roots are from Keta, Kedzi and Woe (tri-city) and her maternal roots are from Dzelukɔfɛ in the Volta region of Southeastern Ghana. After her basic educational training, she went on to pursue many other academic laurels and holds several degrees. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology and Religion (double major) from the University of Ghana, Legon. She also holds a Master in T-Studies (1992) in Religion and Society from Harvard University and Cambridge. Her Doctor of Philosophy (2002) is in Pastoral Theology/Christian Education. She wrote on 'Cosmology and Pastoral Diagnoses: A Psycho-theological Anthropology for Pastoral Counselling in Ghana.' Apart from the many academic degrees achieved by Acolatse, she has several honorary degrees and appointments to distinguished councils. Her many honours include the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) College of Mentors from 2019 to the present. She is also a member of the Association of Theological Schools, Board of Commissioners from 2018 to the present; the Carnegie African Diaspora Scholar 2016–2017 and a member of the Advisory Council of the Journal and Dictionary of African Christian Biography (Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission).

Major Theological Thrust/Research Interests

The main theological thrust of Acolatse's (2001, 121) work is that

'Sin is not the acts we commit or omit but it is the refusal of the self to be the self that God intended it to become. Sin is missing the mark of full humanity. Her work is intended to help people find their way to their true selves and become the glory of God. This entails correcting and speaking against structures, (whether ecclesial or secular) that stand against the flourishing of the self.'

Acolatse's research interests are reflected in her several research projects, which focus on the exploration of the intersections between psychology and Christian thought, particularly its reformed expression. Within this intersection is a concern with the gendered body and Christian experience as well as methodological and hermeneutical issues in the practice of the Christian life and the reception of Christian theology historically and systematically. At the nexus of themes in the global expression of Christianity is a search for a common language for the expression and articulation of world Christianity in aid of the unity of the Church. She is engaged in projects that build bridges between what is often called African realities and the theological world shaped by realities and methods of discourse about them, of a different kind. For Acolatse, these issues, at present, seem to be among the most important for ecumenical and interreligious debate, given the present configuration of the Christian world. Acolatse's stance above is exhibited

in her work on Christianity as a non-Western religion, African Christologies, Pentecostal Charismatic Movements in Africa and the Diaspora, African Traditional Religion in Christian thought, faith and culture, the method in Practical Theology, Pastoral Theology, cross-cultural pastoral care and counselling, pastoral care and gender issues, psychology of religion, creation, death and dying and eschatology across cultures.

Work History

Acolatse is currently at Garret- Evangelical Theological Seminary in the United States of America. She has worked in several institutions which include Knox College and Toronto School of Theology as a Professor of Pastoral Theology and Intercultural Studies as Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Intercultural Studies from July 2017–June 2022 (Acolatse Curriculum Vitae). She has also previously worked at the Duke Divinity School, Durham, as Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology and World Christianity from 2006–2017; Loyola College, Baltimore MD as Visiting Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology and World Christianity from 2004–2006 and as Assistant Professor of Theology, in the same institution from 2001–2003 (Acolatse Curriculum Vitae). Professor Esther Acolatse's vast work experience has in addition to teaching both undergraduate and graduate level courses in various institutions, included supervision of theses and dissertations at various levels of teaching. As Minister of Word and Sacrament, Acolatse has preached numerous sermons in congregations and religious gatherings globally.

Encounter with Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Aunty Mercy) and Participation in The Circle

Acolatse, as one of the founding members of and participants in the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* was at the inauguration in Ghana in 1989. She has since attended and actively participated in some of the key conferences organised by the Circle. She has used her expertise in pastoral counselling in her involvement in grass-root interventions on issues of gender that have been of concern to the Circle. Her work with the Circle began when she first met Mercy Amba Oduyoye at the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Center in Bossey, Switzerland, in 1989. This meeting was later followed by their meeting at the inauguration of the Circle in Ghana. Acolatse has related how Oduyoye had come to Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) as a visiting Professor when she (Acolatse) was a student there. During this period, Oduyoye had been physically present at the naming ceremony of her (Acolatse's) son and they had partied together on that day.

They had met also in Kenya and Cameroon where Oduyoye had proposed the need for choosing new leaders for the Circle. During the nomination process for new leadership within the Circle, Oduyoye graciously exited the room, affording

participants the autonomy to select their new leader. Amidst the ensuing commotion, Oduyoye's encouragement prompted Acolatse to assume the role of a pastoral counsellor, facilitating the mediation process towards the successful selection of new leadership for the Circle (Acolatse 1996). Even though Professor Acolatse did not engage directly with the writings of Oduyoye in her own work, she (Acolatse) had encouraged a young woman, Oluwatomisin Olayinka Oreden, to do a doctoral dissertation on '*The Theology of Mercy Amba Oduyoye: Ecumenism, Feminism and Communal Practice*' (which has been published recently by the University of Notre Dame Press, (2023). In the Acknowledgements of this bookⁱ, the student gives a very beautiful testimony about Professor Esther Acolatse's mentorship, which made this book come into being.

Professional Affiliations and Activities

This section uses Acolatse's Curriculum Vitae to demonstrate the work that she has been involved in. Acolatse has been a member, affiliated to and is actively involved in several professional bodies like the International Academy of Practical Theology, American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature, President and Programme Unit Chair of African Association for the Study of Religion, Society for Pastoral Theology in 2011, Yale-Edinburgh Group for the Study of Christianity in a Non-Western World, Associate Fellow of the Centre for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at De Paul University from 2015 to present and H. F. Guggenheim Foundation as Advisor to Young African Scholars from 2010–2012.

Professor Esther Acolatse has also been a Steering Committee member of various American Academy of Religion groups including the Evangelical Theological Studies Group, 2009 to present, Christian Theological Research Fellowship from 2009–2020, African Association for the Study of Religion as Chair and North American Representative for the International Association for the Study of the History of Religions 2012 to present and a member of the Executive Nominating Committee in 2012 and 2016. She has also given several distinguished lectures and has been selected or invited to present papers at Academic Conferences (Acolaste n.d., 4–5).

Acolatse's scholarly contributions encompass a diverse array of publications and submissions in esteemed peer-reviewed journals, reflecting her dedication to exploring the intricate intersections of religious and pastoral dynamics within African contexts and beyond. Notable among her published works are two monographs, '*Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West*' (2018) and '*For Freedom or Bondage: A Critique of African Pastoral Practices*' (2014), both published by W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Her entries in the 'Encyclopaedia of the Bible and its Reception' (EBR), titled '*Satan, Christianity, World Christianity*' and '*Names and Naming, Christianity, World Christianity*,' exemplify her interdisciplinary approach to probing biblical interpretation across diverse socio-cultural milieus. Furthermore, her article

'African Pastoral Responses to Pandemics in a Digital Age: Between Providence, Prudence and Politics,' currently in the *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, underscores her proactive engagement with contemporary issues. Beyond traditional academia, her interviews and biographical sketches in the *Journal of African Christian Biography* shed light on the lived experiences and contributions of significant figures within African Christian contexts, thereby enriching scholarly discourse and amplifying marginalised voices. In essence, Acolatse's scholarly portfolio demonstrates her profound impact in fostering dialogue, critical inquiry and cultural understanding within the academic sphere.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, Professor Esther Acolatse's work has had a direct bearing on both the academy and the church. As a prominent figure within the community, her contributions merit significant commendation and recognition, particularly in her role as a matriarch. She exemplifies the core principles of the Circle by engaging not only with academic discourse but also by actively involving herself at grassroots levels. Acolatse's meticulous examination of gender-sensitive issues, particularly her exploration of the gendered body and her conceptualisation of sin as anything that obstructs the intended alignment of the self with divine purpose, represents a profound intellectual contribution. Moreover, her engagement with topics spanning gender dynamics, psychology, religion, creation, death, dying and eschatology across diverse cultural contexts underscores her aptitude and credentials as a genuine Pastoral Care Counselor. Professor Esther Acolatse offers the Circle a great resource and ideas for thought. It is an encouragement for both upcoming and well-established Circle members and affiliates to strive for higher heights. Acolatse's achievements and active practicalisation of such are empowering. Perhaps, this author's way forward will be a rhetorical question: Can we all take some cues from the work of our sister and matriarch, Professor Esther Acolatse?

Notes

- i. The testimony in the Foreword of Oerden's book, *The Theology of Mercy Amba Oduyoye* can be accessed at: <https://scholar.google.ca/scholar>.

Bibliography

- Acolatse, E. "Conversation with Esther Acolatse." In *The Second Pan-African Conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*, edited by C. Pemberton. Nairobi: Methodist Guest House, 1996.
- Acolatse, E. "Rethinking' Sin and Grace: An African Evangelical Feminist Response to Neibuhr." In *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by N.J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 121–139. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.
- Acolatse, E. "Christian Divorce Counseling in West Africa: Seeking Wholeness through Reformed Theology and Jungian Dreamwork." *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 1–17.

- Acolatse, E. *For Freedom or Bondage: A Critique of African Pastoral Practices*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014.
- Acolatse, E. *Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018.
- Acolatse, E. "Pentecostalism and Secularisation in the Philosophy of Wariboko: The Logic of the Spirit in the Formation of African Civil Society." In *The Philosophy of Nimi Wariboko: Social Ethics, Economy, Society and Religion*, edited by Toyin Falola, 223–240. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2020.
- Acolatse, E. "...and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit: The Relational Nature of the Spirit in God and Humans." In *The Third Person of the Trinity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, edited by Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, 121–137. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- Acolatse, E. "Engaging the Constructive Theology of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen: On the Spirit and spirits in African Reformed Perspective." In *The Dialogic Evangelical Theology of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen: Exploring the Work of God in a Diverse Church and a Pluralistic World*, edited by Peter Hetzel, Patrick Oden, and Amos Yong, 79–94. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic Press, 2022.
- Acolatse, E. Forthcoming. "African Catholicism & the Ecumenical Movement in Africa: Challenges and Possibilities." In *Handbook of World Catholicism*, edited by William Cavanaugh and Stan Chu Ilo. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Acolatse, E. "Satan, Christianity, World Christianity" and "Names and Naming, Christianity, World Christianity." In *Encyclopaedia of the Bible and its Reception (EBR)*. Berlin: De Gruyter, n.d.
- Acolatse, Esther. "Curriculum Vitae." Accessed April 14, 2024. <https://garrett.academia.edu/EstherAcolatse/CurriculumVitae>, n.d.
- Akoto, D. BEA. "The Mother of the Ewe and the Firstborn Daughter as the 'Good Shepherd' in the Cultural Context of the Ewe Peoples of Southeastern Ghana: A Liberating Approach." In *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, edited by Musa W. Dube and Gerald O. West, 260–277. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughter of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Oduyoye, M.A., and Kanyoro, M.R.A. (eds.). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Oerden, O.O. *The Theology of Mercy Amba Oduyoye: Ecumenism, Feminism and Communal Practice*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023.

Chapter 43

HONORABLE REV. PAULINA A. KUMMADEY-SENANU: THE LIFE AND WORK OF A PIONEER WOMAN

Etoile L. Ayorkor Ajavon-Djanie

Introduction

Rev. Paulina A. Kummadey-Senanu's life story reflects a journey marked by dedication, resilience and service. Born in 1923 to Eva Kunya Ameyo Amehoe and Alfred Kormi Dormeanenu, her upbringing instilled in her a strong work ethic and a commitment to community values. Despite facing societal challenges, she pursued education with determination, excelling academically. Her marriage and subsequent roles as an educator and political figure further underscore her dedication to societal progress. As a revered member of the A.M.E Zion Church and a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, her contributions left an indelible mark on theological discourse and community development. This chapter aims to honour her legacy and celebrate her remarkable life and contribution. The main source of information is from the *Funeral Brochure* of Kummadey-Senanu and interview with the current presiding Bishop of A.M.E. Ghana.

Brief Background and Upbringing

Kummadey-Senanu was born on 21 April 1923 to Eva Kunya Ameyo Amehoe of Nogokpo and Alfred Kormi Dormeanenu of Kumadey-Korfe, Agbozume. She hailed from what can be described as a conventional family characterised by values conducive to the cultivation of a commendable character. Known for her prompt and cheerful service to her parents and others, she demonstrated honesty and accountability from an early age (*Funeral Brochure* 2018). Often accompanying her mother on journeys to fetch water and market trips, Kummadey-Senanu developed a positive work ethic rooted in these regular experiences. Her close relationship with her mother who instilled discipline in her, contributed significantly to her upbringing. Throughout her life, she exhibited a joyful and diligent approach to all tasks assigned to her, a trait noted by many who observed her. According to

the *Funeral Brochure* (2018) in an interview, Kummadey-Senanu maintained a strong bond with both of her parents, although she predominantly accompanied her mother.

During a period spent with her father in Togo, she underwent a conversion experience and was baptised in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Notably, her parents were actively engaged in their respective occupations with her father serving as a tailor and her mother as a merchant in cottons and wares. Following her baptism, Kummadey-Senanu returned home and became affiliated with the Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) Zion Church in Agbozume. Here, she underwent discipleship as a new convert, demonstrating a remarkable eagerness to absorb the teachings of the Bible. Actively participating in church meetings, she immersed herself in the word of God and commenced her involvement as a chorister within the congregation. Despite her youthfulness at the time of joining the choir, she garnered admiration from the choir master who recognised her as the first young girl to join the choir since its establishment in Agbozume. This recognition resulted in special treatment, inspiring other young individuals to join the choir and consequently contributing to the growth of both the choir and the church community (Dogbe 2022).

Educational Training

Kummadey-Senanu was afforded the opportunity to commence her formal education at Ebenezer A.M.E Zion School alongside her cherished brother, Seth M. Kummadey, at the age of ten in 1933, with the aim of enriching her intellectual acumen. Remarkably, owing to her adeptness, Kummadey-Senanu was swiftly promoted from class one to class three within the same academic year. Subsequently, she pursued her elementary education at Somey National School located in Dzenunyekpodzi-Agbozume in southeastern Ghana, advancing up to standard two. She successfully concluded her elementary schooling at Peki Methodist School Avetile in 1943 under the guardianship of her aunt, Mrs A.K Mensah Senior. During her educational journey, she became engaged to Mr Christian Xodanu Senanu, a teacher at the Methodist Primary School Avenui-Awudome, as arranged by her parents. Their marriage was consummated in 1944, following her completion of elementary school at the age of 21, henceforth assuming the name Mrs Kummadey-Senanu.

Regrettably, the couple experienced the tragic loss of their male offspring during infancy, leaving behind two daughters, Erica and Enyonam. Despite the profound sorrow, Ameyo exemplified unwavering faithfulness to God amidst adversity. This resilience underscores the belief that challenging circumstances serve as tests of faith, compelling individuals to steadfastly hold onto their beliefs even in times of distress or disappointment. Mr Kummadey-Senanu's professional trajectory led to his transfer from Avenui Methodist Primary School to Tsito Awudome Methodist

Primary School where he assumed the roles of headmaster and catechist. This also changed the trajectory for Paulina Kummadey-Senanu (*Funeral Brochure* 2018).

Work History

The elevation of her husband to a prominent position within the church community conferred upon Kummadey-Senanu a position of significant influence. Despite not holding a teaching role at the time, her longstanding commitment to Christian service from childhood did not escape the notice of the church elders. Unfortunately, in certain contexts and eras, women's recognition within religious spheres has been contingent upon their marital status, a reality that persists even today. Consequently, the church elders endorsed her for a teaching role, prompting them to advocate for her appointment as a student teacher to the overseeing Reverend Minister responsible for Methodist Schools. Subsequently, the Minister sanctioned her appointment as a student teacher at Tsito Awudome Methodist Primary School in January 1949.

Remarkably, during her second year in this capacity, an education officer named Ruby Papafio from the Accra Education Office visited the school and expressed admiration for Kummadey-Senanu's contributions despite her lack of formal teacher training. Impressed by her dedication and competence, the Education Officer pledged to provide her with a programme for an external examination which she subsequently excelled in, obtaining an external teacher's certificate on 10 October 1953. Possessing such qualifications underscored her understanding of the pivotal role of education within society. Consequently, both she and her husband received high esteem from the Church Elders at Tsito for their contributions. They played integral roles in establishing the Institute of Adult Education alongside David Kimble and Ms Lalage Brown from Europe, inaugurating the Awudome Secondary School and facilitating the expansion of the Methodist Primary School and the construction of the Methodist Chapel.

Due to their exemplary work ethic, the church administration hesitated to release the couple for relocation (Dogbe 2022). Consequently, they negotiated their resignation from the Methodist Education Unit and transitioned to the Anglican Unit. Their new assignments led them to Fante New Town-Kumasi and the Senior Anglican School-Kumasi. Subsequently, Kummadey-Senanu was reassigned to Ohwemasi Anglican Primary School in 1954 where she made significant contributions to both the school and the local church community. Despite her relatively brief tenure, her departure was met with profound sadness by the school and church members. In the same year, Kummadey-Senanu's husband pursued further studies at the University of Legon prompting their return to Agbozume. Kummadey-Senanu resumed her teaching career at Somey National School in Agbozume and reconnected with her childhood church, Ebenezer A.M.E Zion Church. However, her teaching profession was intermittently interrupted by her involvement in politics (*Funeral Brochure* 2018).

Paulina and her husband joined the Convention People's Party (C.P.P) while they were at Tsito in 1947. This was because, like many members, Kummadey-Senanu's husband C.X. Senanu was a contemporary of Dr Kwame Nkrumah at Achimota College in the 1930s. When Kummadey-Senanu was transferred to Nogokpo Local Authority Primary School, she combined her teaching with church activities, politics and social work. Though it was difficult, she managed and balanced all these works. She was the treasurer and adviser to Somey Traditional Council, one of the C.P.P leaders for Keta Constituency and Leader of Delegations. Her husband was very much involved in the creation of Ketu District as a separate entity from the Keta District.

He was the President's nominee for the post of first District Commissioner for the Ketu District. Unfortunately, Kummadey-Senanu's husband C.X. Senanu died suddenly on 5 May 1960 before the approval of his nomination (Dogbe 2022). In appreciation of her work as a C.P.P member, coupled with the demise of her husband, Kummadey-Senanu was appointed the Volta Regional Organiser of the National Council for Ghana Women. During the election of members to the last parliament in the early sixties, Kummadey-Senanu was rewarded again with an election to the National Assembly to represent the Ketu District. While in politics, she had the chance to be on delegations to Europe and Russia. She learnt how communities were built with everything, such as schools, markets and recreational centres within reach. Then came Ghana's coup d'état in February 1966 and her political career came to an end. Kummadey-Senanu and her comrades were all politically detained for protection and were released after six months (*Funeral Brochure* 2018).

After her release from political detention, she went back to teaching and was posted to Akuse Methodist Primary. As her responsibilities in the A.M.E Zion Church increased, she requested for a release from the Methodist Education Unit to A.M.E Zion Education Unit. She was posted to Aggrey Memorial A.M.E Zion Primary School-Mamprobi. Kummadey-Senanu loved children and would do anything to help them. As such, she organised retired teachers to establish kindergarten and day nursery schools in the Ablekuma Sub District of the Ghana Education Service. Due to her hard work, she was appointed the first Nursery Organiser for the Ablekuma sub-District of the Ghana Education Service, a position she held until her voluntary retirement from the teaching profession in 1979. Despite having held these positions, Kummadey-Senanu was down to earth. She also sought the welfare of the retired teachers with whom she was working or teaching children (Dogbe 2022).

In an interview, the Rt Rev. Hilliard K. Dela Dogbe (2022) shared that Kummadey-Senanu was ordained as a reverend of the A.M.E Zion church on 2 February 1980 by Bishop Cecil Bishop. Her ministerial name was Rev. Paulina Kumadey. Her ordination was as a result of her selfless devotion to the service of the church in many capacities. Her first station of duty was A.M.E Zion Church, Ebenezer Society, New Sempe, the church she started in the garage of a certain

Mr Amenyawu. Through her hard work, Rev. Kummadey established the Ebenezer A.M.E Zion Basic School with 32 pupils. She was assisted by Mrs Effort Dogbegah who was the first headmistress with Mr William Azumatse and Mad. Rejoice Matsiador as the first teacher and attendant respectively. It was initially a private school but was absorbed into the public school system in September 1995 (*Funeral Brochure* 2018).

Participation in Circle

Kummadey-Senanu was the A.M.E Zion church women representative on the Christian Council of Ghana, an appointment which gave her the opportunity to travel widely to the World Council of Churches (W.C.C) conferences in Africa and Europe. As a representative she presented the matters relating to women in the church at their conferences and sought for solutions to problems of some women and the women's wing in general. She was also the representative of the All-African Council of Churches (A.A.C.C) conferences in Africa and the Director of Home Mission of the A.M.E Zion church, a position she held for more than ten years. Kummadey-Senanu served as Chief of Protocol of the East Ghana Conference of the Church (*Funeral Brochure* 2018). She became a well-known personality because of the positions she held and the number of people she had impacted through these positions (Dogbe 2022). During one of the aforementioned conferences, she encountered other female theologians such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Nyambura Njoroge, Theresa A.D. Acolatse, among others. This led to collaborations and subsequently the formation of the Circle comprising of 70 female theologians in 1989.

Contribution to Church growth

Kummadey-Senanu was the architect in church planting of A.M.E Zion Churches in Togo and Ivory Coast Conference. She also served as host at the Bishops Residence and hosted the following Bishops: Bishop Speaks, Bishop Cecil Bishop, Bishop White, Bishop Williams, Bishop Strickland, Bishop Brown and Bishop Monroe. The bishops and their spouses all appreciated the care they enjoyed at the residence. After 32 years of faithful service as a Reverend, Kummadey-Senanu retired at the age of 89 and continued to fellowship with the Madina Branch of the A.M.E Zion Church until she died of old age in January of 2018 (*Funeral Brochure* 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life and contributions of Rev. Paulina Ameyo Kummadey-Senanu epitomise unwavering dedication and service both within the Christian community and the educational sphere. Despite the societal challenges that often-marginalised women's roles compared to that of their spouses, Paulina's commitment to

Christian service from her formative years did not go unnoticed by church elders, ultimately leading to her appointment as a student teacher. Her remarkable journey from a student teacher to obtaining external teaching qualifications underscored her understanding of the importance of education in society. Alongside her husband, she played pivotal roles in establishing educational institutions and facilitating the growth of the church community. Her involvement in politics further demonstrated her commitment to societal welfare beyond the church and classroom. Despite facing political detainment, she persevered in her service to both the church and education upon her release.

Her ordination as a Reverend marked a significant milestone in her spiritual journey, further amplifying her impact within the church community. Participation in initiatives such as the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and her contributions to church planting exemplify her broader commitment to advancing the role of women within religious and societal spheres. Even in retirement, she continued to fellowship with the church, leaving behind a legacy of faithfulness and service. In essence, Rev. Paulina Ameyo Kummadey-Senanu's life story serves as an inspiration, not only for her steadfast devotion to Christian values but also for her tireless efforts in advancing education, women's empowerment and church growth. Her legacy lives on as a testament to the transformative power of service and dedication to the betterment of society.

Bibliography

"*Funeral Brochure* of Rev. Paulina Ameyo Kummadey." 2018.

Dogbe, Hilliard K. Dela. (Presiding Bishop of A.M.E. Zion Church). 2022. Interview by author.

Chapter 44

REV. MRS ANNA QUANSAH: MULTI-TALENTED INDUSTRIOUS WOMAN OF FAITH

Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh

Introduction

In 1989, a cohort of 70 women assumed the foundational roles as the progenitors of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth, the Circle. This paper endeavours to illuminate and commend the notable contributions made by Rev. Mrs Anna Quansah to the establishment and inception of the Circle, as well as her leadership within *Faith-Based Organisations*. The juxtaposition of ministry and secular employment presents a perennial quandary for individuals heeding the call to serve in religious capacities. Particularly for women pursuing careers, reconciling the demands of ministerial obligations with professional aspirations poses a formidable challenge. Within the context of African societies, women often manifest a remarkable breadth of skills, enabling them to navigate the manifold responsibilities associated with religious duties while concurrently engaging diverse spheres of influence. This chapter undertakes a focused inquiry into the endeavours of Quansah within the realms of *Faith-Based Organisations*, entrepreneurial pursuits and the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. Through an examination of Quansah's multifaceted and industrious endeavours, this chapter seeks to elucidate her exemplary qualities, offering insights for potential emulation within similar contexts.

An Account of the Works of Quansah

Quansah assumed a prominent role in public leadership within a faith-based organisation, specifically the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion Church). The imperative to document Quansah's contributions to the advancement of the A.M.E. Zion Church within the Central Region of Ghana and her pivotal role in the establishment of The Circle underscores the necessity for scholarly attention. This chapter endeavours to augment existing discourse by examining and elucidating Quansah's significant strides towards fostering the

empowerment of women both within the ecclesiastical domain and the academic sphere. Central to this exploration is the conviction that the manifold talents and capabilities inherent in women constitute invaluable assets indispensable for the progression and enrichment of both the church and broader African society. Rev. Mrs Anna Quansah also known as ‘Aberewa’, or ‘ANET’ was born on 25 May 1942 in Cape Coast, the Central Region of Ghana. Her father Nana Mensah-Tandoh was the Omanhene (Chief) of Ampenyi in the Komenda-Edina-Aguafo Traditional Area in the Central Region (*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

Her nickname: ‘Aberewa’ (wise/elderly woman) depicts the traditional political position of her father as a chief and the ability of Quansah to give wise counsel. The concept of ‘Aberewa’ in the traditional political cabinet is an old woman who is consulted for advice when the cabinet is unable to take a decision on a critical matter (Chiangong 2013; Aidoo 1985; Adjaye and Aborampah 2004). It is an indication that old age is often associated with wisdom but also earned. Although there may be some restrictions on women’s involvement in some traditional rituals and political positions in Ghana, the concept of ‘Aberewa’ points to the fact that women were highly respected in traditional political administration. The reference to Quansah as ‘Aberewa’ at a tender age seeks to demonstrate that she was gifted. The gift to give wise counsel was discovered by the father who was not a novice in traditional politico-social life space. The nickname ‘ANET’ was later given to her by her peers. It was derived from a business she established and the success she achieved. Quansah schooled at A. M. E. Zion School in Cape Coast and later at the Offinso Teacher Training College. She became a teacher and taught at Inchaban Methodist School in Sekondi/Takoradi and later at Anomabo Methodist School all in the Central Region. She resigned from her teaching profession in 1973. It is not clear what led to her resignation. However, the concept of ‘Aberewa’ was attested to in her teaching career and voiced in the testimonies of the students she taught. She is celebrated for the professional and corrective manner in which she handled students who were not academically gifted (*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

Upon resignation, Quansah turned to business where she established a company called ANET Enterprises, which is a beverage distribution company. She was successful in business and became an influential person in society. As her journey of life continued, she began to ask her family a biblical question:

‘What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world but to lose his soul to wealth?’
(*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

The question is a paraphrase of Mark 8:36. Prior to this moment Rev. Mrs Quansah was a Christian and a member of the A. M. E. Zion Church. She served as a chorister in the Varick Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church between the early 1950s and early 1960s (*Funeral Brochure* 2006). It suggests that she became a chorister during her adolescent years.

She was exposed to the Methodist Church tradition because her father was an elder of the church and she began her teaching career in Methodist schools. In

addition, her mother was a member of the Anglican Church before she was born and retained her membership there (*Funeral Brochure* 2006). Quansah's question regarding wealth and salvation seems to suggest that she was losing a large portion of her time and dedication to business more than religious duty. The question signified her journey towards full-time ministry. Therefore, the need to abandon all and surrender to the call for ministry work. It reflects the concept behind the response to the call of the first disciples of Jesus. After the bumper harvest by Peter and his colleagues/siblings, they left all and followed Jesus as his disciples (Mk. 1:18–20; Matt. 13:44; Lk. 5:11). Probably, Peter and his colleagues/siblings have enough to sustain their families hence they can abandon their profession and follow Jesus (Just Jr. 1996, 209–210). A similar statement could be made about Quansah. However, the question remains whether one should necessarily abandon one's profession to respond to the call for ministry.

Quansah underwent formal training and ascended to the ministry within the Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church situated in Cape Coast, following the footsteps of her grandmother, Madam Mary Davidson. Notably, Madam Davidson played a pivotal role in the establishment of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Cape Coast in 1903, thereby imparting a familial legacy of religious stewardship to Quansah. In 1988, Quansah attained the position of a Deacon, wherein she adeptly balanced her ministerial responsibilities with engagements in both major and minor business endeavours. Subsequently, her commitment to the ministry culminated in her ordination as a priest, following the successful completion of pastoral studies at the Institute of Conference Studies and Continuing Education, an institution dedicated to the training of ministers for the A.M.E. Zion Church. It is noteworthy that upon assuming the priestly role, Quansah relinquished her personal business pursuits entirely, thereby devoting herself wholly to her pastoral duties (*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

Quansah took her priestly duties very seriously and had remarkable and exceptional achievements in the area of missions and expansion of the frontiers of the A. M. E. Zion Church in Cape Coast where she established a branch of the Church at OLA in Cape Coast—St. Paul's A. M. E. Zion Church and Ebenezer A. M. E. Zion Church at Ampenyi, her hometown. She also spearheaded the construction of a new school building for the Varick Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church. The Rev. Dr Kenneth Monroe, presiding bishop of Western West Africa Episcopal District testified concerning the ministry of Quansah stating that

'even though I did not have the opportunity to serve with her in formal years, her contributions and service to God as a pastor and presiding elder were so widely known and respected that I was to know her by the fruits she was able to produce in her ministry' (*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

Under the leadership of Quansah, the Varick Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church gained the status of a Cathedral. Her pastoral leadership was a combination of

managerial principles of business and Christian discipline she acquired earlier in life (*Funeral Brochure* 2006).

Besides ministry in the A. M. E. Zion Church, Quansah contributed to the health sector in the Central Region. As the Director of Health Services of the West Ghana Conference, she mobilised resources for the resuscitation of the Gomoa Akwamu clinic that serves persons beyond the scope of the A. M. E. Zion Church (*Funeral Brochure* 2006). She appealed to the then government to consider using the Highly Indebted and Poor Countries (HIPC) funds to renovate and improve health facilities and health insurance in Ghana (General News of Saturday 2003).

The involvement of Quansah with the Circle dates back to 1989, the year of its inauguration. At the time, many women were invited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (founder) to participate in various discussions regarding the inauguration of the group. Some women were resistant but Quansah responded positively to the invitation and participated in the meetings. To show her commitment to the Circle publicly, Quansah was among the 70 persons who made history by being present at the inaugural ceremony at the Trinity College in Ghana in 1989. Hence Quansah is one of the founding matriarchs of The Circle, a space that has nurtured hundreds of African women theologians continent-wide and in the Diaspora. Many of the Circle women serve in academic spaces, others in faith institutions and many in both. Quansah's legacy has inspired many contemporary African women theologians. Indeed, her public leadership as an educator, businesswoman and leader in faith-based organisations remains an important model for African women in the Circle and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of Quansah's multifaceted contributions to both the A.M.E. Zion Church and The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians underscores her profound impact within religious, academic and societal spheres. Through her steadfast dedication and leadership, Rev. Quansah not only advanced the growth and development of the A.M.E. Zion Church within the Central Region of Ghana but also played a pivotal role in the establishment and nurturing of The Circle, thereby fostering the emergence of countless African women theologians. Her journey from business entrepreneurship to ordained ministry exemplifies a profound dedication to spiritual calling and service, epitomising a fusion of managerial acumen and Christian values. Furthermore, her advocacy for healthcare improvement and equitable resource allocation demonstrates a broader commitment to social welfare beyond ecclesiastical confines. As a founding figure of The Circle, Quansah's legacy continues to inspire and empower contemporary African women theologians, leaving an indelible mark on both religious and academic landscapes. In essence, her exemplary life and leadership serve as a beacon for women's empowerment and societal progress, embodying the enduring

significance of harnessing the divine gifts inherent in women for the betterment of church and society in Africa.

Chapter 45

MARGARET LILIAN NAA TSAWE QUIST: A VOICE WITH THE OVERLOOKED

Leticia Oduro Asante

Introduction

Margaret Liliane Quist was raised by her grandmother from the age of three and emerged as a significant figure in both academic and activist circles. Diligent in her studies both in Ghana and the United States of America, Quist's intellectual pursuits were paralleled by her commitment to Christianity and social justice. A teacher by profession, she became known as a feminist activist and a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth, the Circle), advocating for women's rights and equality. Beyond academia, Quist's engagement extended to various organisations, including her involvement in women's committees such as the Circle and her contributions to the United Church, particularly in shaping the women's ministry. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive reflection on Quist's biography and theological perspectives, tracing her influential trajectory until her passing in 2021, using the *Funeral Brochure* (2021).

The Life of Margaret Naa Tsawe Quist

The Circle emerges as a significant African feminist movement originating within an ecumenical context, aiming to redress gender disparities prevalent within faith-based organisations and broader societal structures. Founded with the purpose of advocating for women's liberation, empowering African women across various spheres, encouraging scholarly engagement with issues of religion, gender and culture, as well as addressing diverse concerns affecting African women. These ideas were extremely attractive and important to Quist who had a heart and vision for the emancipation of black women from all forms of oppression. The Circle's inception did not hinge solely on the vision of one individual but recognised the necessity of collective effort. Oduyoye actively sought the collaboration of competent and dedicated African women theologians from academic institutions,

seminaries, churches and conferences, among other platforms, to realise this vision. Among these pioneering African women theologians instrumental in the formation of The Circle was Margaret Lilian Naa Tsawe Quist, whose contributions played a pivotal role in shaping the movement's trajectory and objectives. Quist, born on 18 January 1934 in Osu, Accra, Ghana, received her early education at Co-ed Osu Presbyterian Primary School and Osu Middle Girls School (Chléirigh 2021, 4). Subsequently, she attended Aburi Girls Secondary School starting in January 1950. In 1957, Quist enrolled at the University of Ghana, where she pursued studies in English, History of Philosophy and Theology, laying the foundation for her subsequent engagement with African women theologies (Chléirigh 2021, 5).

Quist secured a scholarship from the American Association of University Women to pursue graduate studies at Columbia University in New York. Additionally, she received sponsorship from the United Presbyterian Church of the USA for a year of study at the University of California, Berkeley during which she concurrently worked at Union Theological Seminary. Following her academic pursuits, Quist assumed roles of increasing responsibility, serving as the Regional Education Director of the Ghana Education Service in 1965 and later as the Director of Basic Education in Ghana in 1983 (Chléirigh, Ní Eibhlín 2021, 6). Apart from her profound role in academia, she was active in many other organisations. Quist was a stout African feminist theologian who supported various women's committees including the Circle. She was a founding member of the United Church and contributed to the writing of the constitution of the women's ministry. In the period 1978–1981, she was appointed the chairperson of the Christian Council Committee. During her tenure of office, she embarked on several charitable services including the supply of food for Ghanaian returnees from Nigeria. Between 1986–1990, she became the African representative for the World Day of Prayer International Committee. Quist demonstrated proficiency in issues of inculturation during her tenure with Asempa Publications as a freelance translator where she played a pivotal role in translating various religious materials from English to Ga, including the enduring 'Light for Our Path' devotional book. These experiences, coupled with her extensive ecumenical engagements, proved invaluable in her contributions to the establishment of the Circle. The visionary initiative of one of our founding mothers to bolster and empower African women theologians has not only left a lasting legacy but continues to empower women to advocate for the marginalised and overlooked in society. Although Quist passed away on 30 January 2021, her impactful legacy endures (Chléirigh 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Margaret Liliane Quist, a significant figure in academic and activist circles, epitomised dedication to Christianity, social justice and the empowerment of African women. As a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Quist advocated for gender equality and women's liberation,

contributing significantly to the movement's trajectory and objectives. Her academic pursuits, coupled with her involvement in various organisations, underscored her commitment to addressing societal inequalities and promoting the rights of marginalised communities. Quist's profound contributions to inculturation, translation work and ecumenical engagement further exemplified her dedication to fostering inclusivity and empowerment within African contexts. While her passing in 2021 marked the end of a remarkable journey, Quist's enduring legacy continues to inspire and empower women to advocate for social change and equality.

Bibliography

- Chléirigh, N.E. "Mrs. Margaret Lilian Naa Tsawe Quist: 1934–2021." 2021. Accessed March 20, 2023. <https://fliphtml5.com/rwmem/abdb/basic>.
- Fiedler, R.N. *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 1989–2007*. Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh8r2j5>.
- "*Funeral Brochure* of Margaret Lilian Naa Tsawe Quist." 2021.
- The Holy Bible: King James Version*. 1611. Reprint, New York: American Bible Society, 1980. Matthew 13:44; Mark 1:18–20; Mark 8:36; Luke 5:11.

Chapter 46

GLADYS OKYEREWASA OSAE-ADDO (NEE AYE): A LIFE OF SACRIFICE

Stella Gyamfi

Introduction

In this chapter, I delve into the multifaceted life and contributions of Dr Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo (nee Aye), whose birth on 7 Apr 1926 in Akropong, Akwapim, Ghana, marks the inception of a narrative characterised by an unwavering dedication to education, service and community leadership. Tracing her educational journey from its roots at Akropong Junior School through her formative years at Agogo Training College and subsequent academic pursuits at Edinburgh University in Scotland, this narrative elucidates Osae-Addo's enduring commitment to intellectual growth and professional advancement. Through examination of her roles as a headmistress at Ridge Church School and National Director of American Field Service (AFS) Ghana, I illuminate her pivotal contributions to the realms of education and international exchange programmes, contextualising her endeavours within broader socio-cultural and historical frameworks. Furthermore, by scrutinising her extensive involvement in diverse organisations, including the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), Scripture Union (SU) and Methodist Church of Ghana, I interrogate the intricate intersections between faith-based community engagement and Osae-Addo's steadfast commitment to societal betterment. This inquiry also critically evaluates her authored works, such as *'Building a Crime-Free Nation'* and *'Newton Families: a Book for Parents Who Love Their Children,'* to discern the thematic underpinnings of her advocacy for youth development and family well-being. Grounded in analysis and drawing upon a range of primary and secondary sources, I seek to offer an understanding of Osae-Addo's enduring legacy, characterised by her humility, compassion and unwavering dedication to service, which continues to inspire generations beyond her passing in March 2016.

Dr. Mrs. Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo's Life

Dr Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo (nee Aye) was born on 7 Apr 1926, at Akropong, Akwapim in the Eastern Region of Ghana. She was the fourth of seven children to

Edward Aye and Mercy Safoa of Akropong, Akwapim. Her formal education took place at the Akropong Junior School after which she attended Agogo Basel Girls School in Agogo. She then proceeded to Agogo Training College where she was trained by Swiss missionaries and qualified as a teacher. She went on to teach at the Agogo Basel Girls School and thus began her teaching career. Later, she taught at the Krobo Odumase Girls School. At the young age of 23, she was awarded a national government scholarship to study childhood education at Edinburgh University in Scotland. She returned home in 1952 and three years later, she married the Rev. L.H.S. Osae-Addo, a Methodist Minister and the couple had five children (*Funeral Brochure* 2016).

Upon her return from studying abroad, she taught in the Methodist School System. She responded to an advertisement in the Daily Graphic Newspaper of Ghana for a teaching position at the elite Ridge Church School with an all-European teaching staff. She was interviewed and received a provisional offer which she accepted. She taught for only two years and was appointed the school's first-ever African headmistress. Osae-Addo excelled at her work and her 25 year career at the Ridge Church School brought together two of her major lifelong commitments: A deep passion for knowledge and education and an unwavering belief in the advantages of grounding children in Christ so that their values are shaped and set while the mind is at its most pliable and the spirit at its most receptive. Together with her dedicated and highly trained staff, Osae-Addo took the Ridge Church School's already high reputation to another level, while expanding its extracurricular facilities and diversifying its staff and student population. During her tenure, Ridge Church school children frequently topped the Common Entrance Examination. This is an exam that students take in order to qualify for university and many went on to become some of the most distinguished professionals and public servants Ghana has produced (*Funeral Brochure* 2016).

In 1976, while Osae-Addo was still headmistress, she was appointed National Director of American Field Service (AFS) Ghana, an international exchange programme that placed Ghanaian students with families in the United States and brought USA students to Ghana. This happened after she had compassionately hosted an American AFS student who needed a home desperately. She later hosted nine other American AFS students over the next 14 years. This second career would, like her work at Ridge, combine her greatest strengths: Her love of children, passion for selfless service, aptitude for working with people of every stripe and skill at mentoring people (*Funeral Brochure* 2016).

Osae-Addo retired from professional work in 1990 but continued to serve her many organisations. She was the first National Board Chairperson of the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) of Ghana. She was in leadership at Scripture Union (SU), GHACOE's Women's Ministry, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Evangelism Committee and the Millennium Christian Women's Network. She was invited to participate in international conferences such as the World Council of Churches Conference on Youth in Geneva, the All-Africa Council of

Churches Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroun and several global transformation conferences in South Africa. As a member of the Methodist Church of Ghana, Osae-Addo was a Bible teacher, counsellor, fundraiser, prayer warrior and leader in the Women's Fellowship and Minister's Wives Association (*Funeral Brochure* 2016).

In 1989, a summons was issued to women within faith communities across Africa, beckoning them to converge and deliberate upon their diverse lived experiences. This historic gathering, attended by women from various educational and ministerial backgrounds including seminaries, Bible schools, universities and ordained ministry marked the inception of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Among the esteemed participants of this seminal event was Osae-Addo whose affiliation with the Circle dates back to its founding year. While her precise level of involvement remains unspecified, Osae-Addo's commitment to theological education is evidenced by her enrolment in courses offered by institutions such as RHEMA Correspondence Bible School, Bible Pathways Ministries and the Haggai Institute for Christian Leaders. In recognition of her seven decades of unwavering dedication to humanitarian service, the Christian Bible College of Louisiana conferred upon her the honorary title of Doctor of Humane Letters in 2012.

Beyond her familial responsibilities as a mother of five, Osae-Addo extended her compassion to numerous other children, leaving an indelible impact on their lives (*Funeral Brochure* 2016). Osae-Addo authored books and had several manuscripts in progress up until her passing. Notable among her books are the following: *Building a Crime-Free Nation*, the book appeals to Ghanaian Christians to help reverse the alarming slide of young ones towards a life of lawlessness, by "arresting the children for Christ before the police arrest them for crime".

Cited as 'Child Evangelism Fellowship Children-Conversion to Christianity, Crime Prevention, Evangelism work, Ghana Missionary Stories, Missions', it had three editions in the following years (1967–1968), (1974–1975) and (1981–1982) in two languages. Her other book is *Newton Families: A Book for Parents Who Love Their Children*. Osae-Addo lived a fulfilled life that extended into her retirement years. She finally passed into eternity in March 2016. She was a quiet, unassuming woman. She was simple, soft-spoken, self-effacing and humorous all at the same time. A week after her passing, more than 600 people poured into her home, overcome with grief and hardly able to take in the news (*Funeral Brochure* 2016).

Conclusion

In summation, the life and legacy of Dr. Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo (nee Aye) represents a profound tapestry of dedication, service and leadership within the realms of education, faith and community engagement. Born in 1926 in Akropong, Akwapim, Ghana, Osae-Addo's journey unfolded against the backdrop of a fervent

commitment to nurturing young minds and fostering spiritual growth. From her early teaching career at Agogo Basel Girls School to her transformative tenure as the first African headmistress at Ridge Church School, Osae-Addo's influence extended far beyond the confines of the classroom, shaping the trajectories of countless students and educators alike. Her leadership in educational institutions and international exchange programmes, such as the American Field Service (AFS) Ghana, underscored her unwavering dedication to fostering cross-cultural understanding and global citizenship. Moreover, Osae-Addo's tireless advocacy for children's rights and family well-being, exemplified through her authorship of influential books like *'Building a Crime-Free Nation'* and *'Newton Families'*, reflects her enduring commitment to societal betterment. Her multifaceted engagement with faith-based organisations, including the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) of Ghana and the Methodist Church of Ghana, further underscores her profound impact on religious communities and humanitarian initiatives.

As a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Osae-Addo's participation in theological dialogues and her pursuit of continued learning exemplify her dedication to advancing theological scholarship and women's empowerment. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Osae-Addo's profound legacy is evidenced by the lives she touched and the enduring impact of her teachings and writings. Despite her passing in 2016, her memory lives on as a beacon of humility, compassion and steadfast devotion to service, leaving an indelible mark on all those who had the privilege of crossing paths with her.

Bibliography

- "*Funeral Brochure* of Mrs. Gladys Okyerewa Osae-Addo." Rev. Peter Kwei Dagadu Memorial Society Methodist Church, Ghana. Osu Ako-Adjei, Accra, 2016.
- Osae-Addo, G.O. *"Building a Crime-Free Nation: Arresting Children for Christ Before the Police arrest Them for Crime"*. Accra Ghana: Step Publishers, 2014.
- Osae-Addo, G.O. *Newton Families: A Book for Parents Who Love Their Children*. Step Publishers, 2014.

Chapter 47

DOCUMENTING THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PROFESSOR DAISY NWACHUKWU

Osamamen Oba Eduviere

Introduction

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth the Circle, is primarily the brainchild of Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye. The Circle has bloomed in fascinating ways for the world to behold. Scholars and theologians in Africa and beyond have become members of this intellectual body, bringing the academic body to the fore when discourses of African women and theology are expounded. As a student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan under the tutelage of Professor Kunbi Labeodan, I was privy to some of her discussions with Professor Dorcas Akintunde (of blessed memory) and Dr Ruth Oke. Looking at these Amazons with respect and awe, I wondered if I could ever measure up in any way to their expertise and knowledge. My mentor, Professor Labeodan gradually brought me into her ‘circle’ with a subtle invitation to the Circle’s Conference in 2016 in Legon. Meeting Mama Mercy Oduyoye, a woman who exudes so much intelligence and expertise in the fields of African women and theology, spurred me to take womanist issues seriously.

The Circle continues to advance scholarly ideas through her Amazons, one of which is Professor Daisy Nwachukwu. As a pioneer member of the Circle, Nwachukwu brightened her corner in academia, making herself noticeable both in Nigeria and across borders. This chapter unveils the giant strides of Professor Nwachukwu in both the academic and social spheres. Until her demise, she kept the wheels of her brainchild Robert Institute for Mission and Development (RIMAD) running. It was difficult to get information about Nwachukwu but with the help of the Registrar of the Institute, Ebere Odimma, most of the information from the autobiography in a *festschrift* written in her honour was made available.

Prof Daisy Nwachukwu' Life

Nwachukwu was born in 1942 to the family of Mr Robert and Mrs Mabel Nwachukwu in Ihie town, Isiala Ngwa, present-day Abia State, Nigeria. Her parents were firm and devout missionaries of the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion. They trained her in the fear of God which led to her upholding strong scriptural tenets such as respect, obedience, hard work and integrity. Many describe her as a humble woman of noble character, an encourager and a role model, amongst other qualities. She was a strict, fair, and firm mother to her five biological children (Divine, Favour, Emmanuel, Nuria & Chinagozi) and adopted sons and daughters, (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Nwachukwu was a Christian whose exemplary life of care for the poor, needy and oppressed was evident to all in her community. She founded a faith-based organisation called (RIMAD). The organisation runs programmes for capacity building in missions, evangelism and development and works with churches, civil society groups and governments, uniquely blending spirituality and faith with psychotherapy in the African context. RIMAD is affiliated with Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo State in running a programme for the Diploma in Missions and Christian Counselling (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Nwachukwu is universally recognised as an exemplary mother and scholar, distinguished by her commitment to imparting her extensive expertise and wisdom to her students, driven by her aspiration for subsequent generations to surpass her achievements. In homage to her contributions, encompassing her biological lineage, the academic community, spiritual connections and mentees, Nwachukwu was hailed as 'blessed' in the festschrift titled '*Counselling, Globalisation and Vocationalisation of Education in Multicultural Settings*,' dedicated to her in 2018 (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Educational Training and Work History

Nwachukwu's upbringing was significantly influenced by her parents' missionary endeavours in the Eastern region of Nigeria which necessitated her attendance at various primary and secondary educational institutions. Her father's guidance and encouragement regarding her vocation in teaching were pivotal in shaping her professional trajectory. Subsequently, having achieved her General Certificate of Education (GCE) O and A levels, she matriculated at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1965 and went on to pursue a bachelor's degree in French and English. Despite the disruption caused by the civil conflict, Nwachukwu successfully completed her undergraduate programme in 1972. Following this, she briefly served with the Federal Ministry of Education, advancing to the position of Senior Education Officer. She then pursued further academic advancement at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York where she earned three degrees: Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Education (M.Ed.) and Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Upon her return from the USA, Nwachukwu briefly assumed leadership roles within the Sub-Unit in Education at the National Commission for UNESCO Nigeria located in Lagos under the purview of the Federal Ministry of Education. Subsequently, she made a formal request for a transfer of her duties to the academic sphere at the University of Calabar. As a pioneering figure, Nwachukwu held several notable positions within the institution. Notably, she served as the Head of the Department of Educational Foundation and Administration, a period during which the department experienced substantial growth, prompting its subsequent division into two distinct departments: Educational Administration and Planning and Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling. Additionally, a new sub-department initially focused on Library Studies was established and later evolved into an independent department (Joshua *et al.* 2018). Nwachukwu held numerous pioneering positions within the academic landscape.

Notably, she achieved the distinction of being the inaugural female Dean of any faculty at the University of Calabar. Throughout her tenure, Nwachukwu served diligently and chaired various committees, demonstrating her commitment to academic leadership. In her capacity as Dean, she played a pivotal role in designing the framework for the Guidance and Counselling practicum, which was implemented across both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Furthermore, Nwachukwu attained the esteemed title of the first female Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calabar and the third female Professor within the institution as a whole. Her academic prowess was further recognised through her appointment as the University of Calabar Orator. Moreover, Nwachukwu was honoured as the 39th Inaugural Lecturer at the University of Calabar. As a trailblazer in the Postgraduate Counsellor Education programme at the University of Calabar, Nwachukwu spearheaded the introduction of several innovative courses, notably including the Ph.D. course in Pastoral Counselling. Over her extensive career as a professor, she mentored numerous students, contributing to the graduation of numerous master's degree holders and 21 doctorate holders, many of whom have ascended to prestigious positions such as professors, Provosts of Colleges and Vice-Chancellors of Universities (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Professor Nwachukwu served as a consultant in various African countries (Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Cameroon, Kenya and South Africa) and other countries like France, Germany, Switzerland and Poland. These positions include International Visiting Scholar to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland in 1991: Educational Consultant to National and International Organisations (World Council of Churches, Geneva; Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Switzerland; UNICEF, UNESCO, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, England; Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling- SIPCC, Dusseldorf, Germany; United Nation Women and Development Peace Education Program, UN, USA) (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Nwachukwu retired from the University of Calabar after a meritorious service of 33 years. She was a member of various academic bodies, among them, the Circle

for Concerned African Women Theologians, Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), American Psychological Association (APA), American Association for Counselling and Development (AACD), Society for International Development (SID), African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC), Women Health and Education Research Network in Nigeria (WHERNIN), International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), Society for International Pastoral Care and Counselling (SIPCC), American Educational Research Association (AERA), Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) and American Association for Pastoral Counselling (AAPC) (International Affiliate) (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Scholarly Achievements

Nwachukwu adapted Freudian psychoanalytic theory to develop a novel therapeutic framework known as the 'five faces' of man, integrating a fifth dimension encompassing spirituality and psychotherapy. As early as 1989, during the inception of the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians, she delivered a seminal paper titled 'The Context of African Women's Life' wherein she elucidated the pervasive presence of sexism, prejudice, stigmatisation and stereotyping within African societies. Nwachukwu astutely observed that these societal malaises have deeply ingrained themselves culturally and socially, permeating even into places of worship among African communities. This observation prompted her to critically question the prospects for women within religious institutions while simultaneously urging African women to collaborate in identifying and addressing the social and cultural barriers they face within their respective societies (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1990). Nwachukwu was a staunch member of the University of Calabar Chapel of Redemption; she took time to pray about what to name the chapel before naming it the Chapel of Redemption. She was a member of the Board of Trustees at the Chapel of Redemption. In addition, she inaugurated the Grace Consulate and was a prominent member of the Bethany sisters, an arm of the Chapel of Redemption as part of her community engagement (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Nwachukwu also received various distinctions, scholarships and prizes. Notable among them were the Mission Scholarship for year-one undergraduates from the Niger-Delta Diocese of the Anglican Communion (19965–19966); the Honour student award for outstanding performance at the University of Nsukka (1966–67); Federal Government of Nigeria Scholarship Award (1978–80); the Columbia University Graduate Research Fellowship, United Nations Peace Education Program, New York, USA (Joshua *et al.* 2018).

Nwachukwu has actively participated in scholarly discourse, contributing to 53 conferences, comprising 26 international, 14 national and 13 state-level events. Additionally, she has authored or co-authored 83 articles published in esteemed national and international journals. Among her notable publications are *Women and Religion*. This paper critically examines the intersection of religion and gender, offering insights into the challenges faced by women within

religious contexts. *The Context of African Women's Life*, which contextualised the experiences of African women. This publication sheds light on the socio-cultural factors influencing the lives of African women. *Jubilee in the Milieux of Tensions (Religious, Social, Economic and Political)*. This work delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by African women amidst various societal tensions, offering a nuanced understanding of their struggles. *Pastoral Care and Counselling in Africa Today* focuses on pastoral care within the African context. This collaborative effort provides valuable insights into counselling practices tailored to African cultural norms and challenges (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1990).

Bibliography

- Joshua M.T., Asuquo P.N., et al. *Counselling, Globalisation and Vocalisation of Education in Multicultural Settings: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Daisy Nwachukwu*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2018.
- Mpolo, J. M. and Nwachuku, D.N. *Pastoral Care and Counselling in Africa Today*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany Peter Lang, 1991.
- Nwachuku, D.N. *Women and Religion*. Women Study Series: Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Geneva: 1990. Lutheran World Federation, Bossy Seminar Lead Working Paper on Women and Religio-Cultural Issues. Geneva, Switzerland, 1990.
- Nwachuku, D.N. The Context of African Women's Life. In Mercy A. Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Eds.) *Talitha Qumi*: pp. 106–108. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1991.
- Nwachuku D.N. *Jubilee in the Milieux of Tensions (Religious, Social, Economic and Political): The African Woman's Dilemma*. Accra Ghana, CIRCLE Documentation Series, 1999.
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A (eds.) *Talitha Qumi: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians Trinity College, Legon, Accra (September 24–2 October 1989)*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990.

Chapter 48

REGINA OGBOZO: CREATIVE PIECE

Carnie Amo-Nyampong

Introduction

Regina Agbozo remains a pivotal yet largely unseen figure within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, symbolising the silent strength and foundational contributions of the organisation's founding matriarchs. As one of the founding members of the Circle, her influence extends beyond the visible realm, shaping its ethos and paving the way for African women in theological scholarship. Despite the absence of detailed records of her academic output, this chapter seeks to honour her indelible imprint on the collective vision of the Circle, acknowledging her alongside other esteemed founding members. Through her steadfast commitment to gender equality and social justice, Agbozo exemplifies the transformative potential of collective action and women's leadership in fostering sustainable progress.

A Founding Circle Member

Regina Agbozo stands as an esteemed matriarch within the annals of the Circle. Her life serves as a beacon of hope and resilience for African women in theological circles. As a founding member of the Circle, Agbozo's steadfast dedication to community and academia remains unparalleled. Despite her often-unnoticed presence, her collaborative efforts alongside her fellow matriarchs have been pivotal in the establishment and progression of the Circle. Through their collective endeavours, they have sown the seeds of hope, nurturing them into a towering tree that offers shade and sustenance to African women navigating the complexities of theological scholarship and community and ecclesial engagement and development. Agbozo's status as a true matriarch within the Circle is indisputable, her immeasurable contributions are celebrated as integral to the organisation's success. Alongside her esteemed peers, Agbozo epitomises the spirit of collaboration and determination that underpins the Circle's remarkable journey. We honour Agbozo's

distinguished contribution to the Circle and recognise Oduyoye's imperative to foreground inclusivity and ensure the active participation of every attendee at the organisation's inaugural meeting (Fiedler 2017).

These distinguished women, including Agbozo, identified as matriarchs, have not only sown the seeds of hope but have also championed women's emancipation and scholarly advancement in Africa. As part of its ongoing efforts in Ghana, the Circle continues to align its initiatives with various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably Goal 5, which seeks to empower women and girls and address gender disparities and Goal 10, aimed at reducing inequalities within and among nations. This work is a testament to the late founding matriarch, Agbozo and her commitment to women's emancipation and scholarly advancement in Africa. Moreover, the Circle's multifaceted approach, characterised by its emphasis on gender-centered, interreligious, interdisciplinary, intersectional and transformative strategies also contribute significantly to the advancement of other SDGs including Goals 1–3 (United Nations Ghana, 2023). The Circle demonstrates a profound dedication to addressing the multifaceted socio-economic and political obstacles confronting women across Africa. Grounded in theological reflection and advocacy, its endeavours aim to foster empowerment among women by facilitating their engagement in diverse spheres such as social, political, economic and religious domains. Through collective action and the leadership of figures like the late Agbozo, the Circle has effectively empowered women to assert their agency and effect positive change. This success underscores the transformative capacity inherent in women's leadership and collective endeavours.

Despite remaining relatively inconspicuous and having limited information available about her contributions, Regina Agbozo's presence and participation at the first inaugural meeting of the Circle is honoured and valued. Her presence signifies her involvement in laying the groundwork for the organisation's success. This short creative excerpt serves as a tribute to her role and acknowledges her contributions. Reflecting on the organisation's journey, Kanyoro, in her keynote address at the second gathering in 1996, recounted how the Circle initially attracted a modest response with approximately 80 women answering the call to establish it. Over time, the organisation has expanded its reach and impact, owing much of its success to the initial seed of hope planted by those early participants. Founders and members of the Circle including Agbozo and Kanyoro, have cultivated an environment conducive for African women to assert themselves and advance in theological discourse and sustainable development. Their collective efforts have laid a foundation for future generations of women to emulate, ensuring their enduring legacy in African Women's Theology and social justice endeavours.

Conclusion

Regina Agbozo epitomised dedication, commitment and unwavering presence within the Circle. The organisation stands as a transformative force for positive

change in Africa, significantly impacting the lives of women and girls throughout the continent. Notably, it has facilitated an increase in the publication output of women in the fields of theology and religion, as well as a rise in the number of ordained women within churches. Both past and present founders and members of the Circle have played pivotal roles in advancing its objectives, leaving behind a legacy poised to inspire future generations of women in theology towards sustainable development. Among these influential figures, Regina Agbozo remains a noteworthy contributor.

Bibliography

- Fiedler, R.N. *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 1989–2007*. Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2017.
- Kanyoro, R.A.M. 1997. Celebrating God's Transforming Power. In Oduyoye, M.A., ed. *Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God Proceedings of the Pan-African Conference of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*. Accra-North: Sam-Woode Ltd, 1997: 7-27
- United Nations Ghana. 2023. *Our Work on the Sustainable Development Goals in Ghana, 2023*. Available from: <https://ghana.un.org/en/sdgs> [accessed 22 March 2023].

Chapter 49

REV. RACHEL ETRUE TETTEH AND WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH

Taba Jennet Otob Epse Benoni-Wang

Introduction

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians emerged as a beacon of scholarly inquiry and advocacy, spearheading efforts to address the multifaceted challenges confronting African women within religious and societal spheres. At the heart of this dynamic collective stands Rachel Tetteh, a pioneering figure whose contributions reverberate across continents and generations. As a member of the Circle, Tetteh's endeavours and impassioned advocacy epitomise a steadfast commitment to dismantling patriarchal structures, empowering women and engendering transformative change within African theological landscapes. The following exposition delves into Tetteh's profound insights and enduring legacy within the Circle, contextualising her contributions within broader discussions on gender equity, theological education and church leadership across Africa. Through an analysis of Tetteh's seminal article, "Women in the Church", her visionary perspectives on theological empowerment and her impact on ecclesiastical practices, this exploration illuminates the indelible mark she has left on African theological thought and praxis. By foregrounding Tetteh's pioneering role within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, this narrative seeks to elucidate the complexities of gender dynamics within African religious contexts, while also celebrating the transformative potential inherent in collaborative efforts towards inclusivity, empowerment and liberation. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this piece, the author could not find any information relating to the early life of Tetteh.

Rachel Etrua Tetteh's Initiation into the Circle

While primarily oriented towards theologians, the Circle fosters inclusivity, extending its reach to women from diverse backgrounds while also nurturing the next generation of African female theologians. Central to its mission is the

identification and rectification of barriers obstructing women's full participation within both religious communities and broader society (Oduyoye 1990, 14). According to its founding Matriarch Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1990, 14), the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth, the Circle, had been in the process of formation since 1983. Its inauguration was prompted by the continental call of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in October 1989 in Togo to celebrate with the World Council of Churches (WCC) the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. AACC was to celebrate the Decade on the theme 'Arise and Shine, for the Light is Come.' To take up this theme, the Circle selected its inaugural theme as 'Daughters of Africa Arise.' Hence in September 1989, when 70 founding members came together, they told themselves 'It's over with dead 'Talitha' for 'Talitha' must now 'qumi'(rise) to be a strong woman (Mark 5:21–43). Yet not a woman in terms of the patriarchal worldviews of African or biblical cultures (Owanikin 1992: 208) but a woman who is made in God's image. This strong woman must surmount all prevailing obstacles with the God-given will to arise (Okure 1993, 221).

Rev. Rachel Etrúe Tetteh was one of the founding Matriarchs of the Circle in 1989. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is a pan-African ecumenical organisation engaged in scholarly research and religio-cultural issues affecting African women in all spheres of life. Though mainly for theologians, the Circle welcomes women of all walks of life and serves to mentor the next generation of African women theologians and others on the obstacles that hinder women from actively participating in their faith communities and society (Oduyoye 1990, 14). Being a church woman, Rev. Tetteh could easily identify with these uplifting tenets of the Circle as can be seen in her inaugural article, "Women in the Church". This article is the only source of documented information of her identity, available to this writer. We meet Rev. Tetteh here as an ordained clergywoman. Again, we know that she hails from Ghana and was born into and ministered in the Methodist Church of Ghana (Tetteh 1989, 172).

Rachel Etrúe Tetteh's Contribution to the Circle

Making an appraisal of women's situation in the church on the eve of the celebration of the Ecumenical Decade, Rev. Tetteh exposed the problem of women's participation in church life in Ghana and Africa. Both biblical texts and the African churches were male-dominated entities with minimal women participation, she argued. Theological education did not affect a great change in women's situation since it left many still under the claws of sexism, tribalism and classism. Theological education did not empower African women, she argued, rather it left women feeling ignorant, inferior, exploited and debarred from developing to their uttermost capabilities. Rev. Tetteh called for transformation. She envisioned hope and liberation in the Word of God and theological education that empowers and liberates all people, women in particular (Tetteh 1989, 182). Crucially, Tetteh

advocated for a paradigm shift towards a theology that emancipates and empowers all individuals, with a particular focus on uplifting African women. Her vision encompassed a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics within theological discourse, eschewing adversarial approaches in favor of collaborative engagement between genders for mutual growth and liberation.

It is with this hope that she urged African women to appreciate the level at which efforts are being made to integrate women's participation. Moreover, they should learn from the life of Ruth that God is involved in the fight for women's liberation. She then cautioned women not to fight against all men or lord it over them as a means of liberation, the way women in other continents were doing. Rather, they should jointly participate in the Lord's vineyard because

calling for an Africa-specific feminism, which does not exclude men' (Tetteh 1989, 182; 255).

Indeed, Mercy Oduyoye's vision for the Circle was a production of a

'theology that flies with two wings,'

That is theological thought that is produced by all genders, all people of God (Oduyoye 1995, 189).

One factor that Rev. Tetteh particularly celebrates is the increase in women's participation in church and theological life in her time as opposed to the 1960s and 1970s. Making a comparison between what she calls 'mushroom churches' and mainline ones, she notes that the latter assumed a more liberative approach by identifying with African culture and presenting Christ as someone contemporary to culture. This kept patriarchy at a low ebb and gave women the opportunity to explore their potential as pastors, prophetesses or lay people, she argued. This phenomenon led many women to move from the mainline churches into the mushroom churches as there they felt empowered and this has increased women's participation (Tetteh 1989).

Owanikin (1992, 206) endorses Tetteh's observations from a Nigerian context. She notes that women were still largely excluded from theological education and priestly ordination, especially in the mission churches and scriptures were used to legitimise this. She too appreciated women's roles as traditional priestesses and how women in Nigeria were using this cultural booster to become founders of churches, hence minimising priestly restrictions. She encouraged mission churches to reconsider their patriarchal structures and theology by allowing women to thrive.

Dube (2014, 318), much later, underlines Tetteh's perspective by exposing the same phenomenon in Botswana. In her ten-year survey of women's situation in the church, she highlights that women's participation in church life and ascension to leadership is on the increase amidst prevailing constraints. Women are increasingly using biblical women as models to legitimise their positioning in church life and leadership. Women in mushrooming churches used pneumatological theology to rise above patriarchy. Dube, like Tetteh and Owanikin, underlines that women

should not be constrained by gender or patriarchal structures to attain any positions in church leadership or theological education. Dube is consistent with her findings by pointing out that the number of women in African Indigenous Churches with access to leadership is much higher than mainline churches because they use dreams and spirit to stake their call to public leadership.

In the Cameroonian context, Zoe Obianga (1979, 174–179) unveiled biting patriarchy and sexism in church settings in the French-speaking regions of Cameroon which either hindered women from priesthood and ordination or restricted their services in church and academy. However, with the celebration of The Decade in Solidarity with Women, some churches began to revisit their stance. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) in the English-speaking regions quickly opened its doors. As one of the prevailing examples of inclusion, one can say that the cry that Tetteh and the others raised in the Circle spurred responses from various church settings in Africa. The PCC opened its doors to female pastors in 1987 and it remains one of the churches that ordains women annually. Here also, women are allowed to pursue their potential to the highest level. Though patriarchal hindrances are still replete in almost all sectors of her church life, Tetteh and the Circle fight on.

Rachel Tetteh's contribution to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is multifaceted and profound, reflecting a keen understanding of the intersectionality of gender, culture and theology within African contexts. Through her advocacy efforts, Tetteh emerges as a trailblazer, catalysing critical conversations and transformative interventions aimed at addressing the systemic barriers impeding women's full participation within religious communities and broader society. Tetteh demonstrated an incisive critique of theological education as a locus of reproduction for gender biases and systemic inequalities. She highlighted how prevailing attitudes of sexism, tribalism and classism within theological pedagogy perpetuate hierarchical power dynamics, leaving women feeling marginalised, exploited and disempowered.

By foregrounding the transformative potential of theological education in fostering inclusivity and liberation, Tetteh advocated for a paradigm shift towards a theology that empowers all individuals, particularly African women. Moreover, Tetteh's insights extend beyond theoretical discourse to encompass practical interventions aimed at effecting tangible change within African religious landscapes. Her observations on the evolving dynamics of church participation, particularly the contrasting approaches of mainstream denominations and 'Mushroom churches,' underscore her acute sociological acumen and her commitment to identifying pathways towards greater inclusivity and empowerment for women within religious institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rachel Tetteh's enduring legacy within the Circle stands as a testament to her unwavering commitment to gender equity, theological empowerment and social justice. 35 years ago, Tetteh and her contemporaries courageously challenged the status quo, denouncing the prevailing tokenism that characterised women's participation in church life. Alongside 68 other visionaries, Tetteh rallied the daughters of Africa to embrace the Decade of the Church in solidarity with Women, infusing their collective endeavor with a profound faith in the transformative power of unity and advocacy (Oduyoye 1990, 15). Today, the reverberations of Tetteh's vision are palpable across African religious landscapes, as increasing numbers of women assume leadership roles, contribute to theological discourse and navigate the corridors of academia.

While Tetteh's dream of a church characterised by inclusivity and peace may remain a work in progress, its seeds have taken root, nourished by successive generations within the Circle. Despite the persistent challenges that continue to beset the church, women's voices now resonate with unprecedented clarity and conviction, a testament to the enduring legacy of Tetteh and her fellow pioneers. As one of the founding matriarchs of the Circle, Tetteh's dream thrives on in hope, inspiring future generations to continue the pursuit of justice, equity and liberation within African religious communities. In honouring Tetteh's legacy, we affirm our commitment to carrying forth the torch of advocacy and empowerment, ensuring that her vision of a more inclusive and equitable church becomes a reality for generations to come. For Rev. Tetteh and the Circle, the journey towards transformative change continues, buoyed by the enduring spirit of hope, solidarity and faith.

Bibliography

- Dube, M.W. "God Never Opened the Bible to Me: Women Church Leaders in Botswana." In *Trajectories of Religion in Africa*, 315–340. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A. (eds.) *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Okure, T. "Feminist Interpretations in Africa." In *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*, edited by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 76–85. New York: Crossroad, 1993.
- Owanikin, R.M. "The Priesthood of Church Women in the Nigerian Context." In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, 206–219. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Tetteh, R.E. "Women in the Church." In *Talitha Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 172–182. Accra: Sam Woode Ltd., 1989.

Zoe-Obianga, R. "The Role of Women in Present-Day Africa." In *African Theology En Route*, edited by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, 174–179. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979.

Chapter 50

REV. (RTD) ADA OFORI-OWUSU: THE SELFLESS PACESETTER

Georgina Kwanima Boateng

Introduction

The inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth, the Circle, was undoubtedly a turning point in the history of theology, religion and culture for many African women in faith communities. As the Circle returns to the site of its formation in the Sankofa 2024 conference, it is apt for reflections to be generated on the pioneering matriarchs. This chapter highlights Rev. (Rtd) Dora Ofori-Owusu, one of the women at this epoch meeting. Born on 17 December 1937 in her hometown Berekum in the Bono (then Brong Ahafo) Region of Ghana, she is at the writing of this manuscript 84 years old. Rev. (Rtd) Dora Ofori-Owusu was destined to be a pacesetter in her own time, being herself the first ordained female minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Her often-used quote,

‘aburow nko, na dokono nko?’

To wit

‘is the substance of *kenkey* (a Ghanaian corn dish usually eaten with sauce) different from the dough it is made from?’

Sums up the driving force behind her contributions to women’s participation in church life and ministry. This chapter is a biographical reflection on the life of Rev. Dora Ofori-Owusu and her engagement with the Circle. The chapter will present a brief background of her upbringing, her educational training and work history and her participation in the Circle formation. The chapter will also further reflect on lessons from her life for the way forward.

Brief Background of Upbringing

In her own words, Ofori-Owusu does not remember her father except that he was called Owusu (Ofori-Owusu 2022). Ofori-Owusu's father died early in her childhood. According to Ofori-Owusu, he had many wives and many children. Ofori-Owusu's mother had nine children from her father. Her father's early death did not leave her destitute due to the extended family system which was much stronger in the days of her childhood. She remembers her days growing up in Berekum as a period when all her aunties were her mothers and all her uncles were her fathers and there was never any distinction.

Educational Training and Work

Ofori-Owusu began her elementary education at Berekum in the Bono region of Ghana. She recounts how her uncle, Ofori saw her one day just hanging around and asked if she wanted to start school, to which she eagerly responded in the affirmative. He immediately enrolled her in elementary school (Ofori-Owusu 2022). Ofori-Owusu is grateful for the communal system of the extended family into which she was born and to which she credits her opportunity to have started school. Her mother helped her to continue her Middle School education after primary 6/6th grade at the Agogo Girls School from 1946–1955 (Kwamena-Poh 2011, 342). When she completed middle school, she was sent off to live with some missionaries who took her with them to Tamale, northern Ghana. When the missionaries began the Tamale Women's Training College, she was among the first students to be enrolled there. Theological training began for her while under Rev. E. M. L. Odjidja's term as moderator. He pushed for women to be included in theological training. Hence, she was among four women who were first enrolled at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana's Ramseyer Training Center at Abetifi, Kwahu in Ghana in 1962/3. She also studied at the Intergenerational Theological Seminary in Atlanta Georgia in 1980 when she had the opportunity to be posted there as a Missionary.

After attending Tamale Teachers' Training College, Ofori-Owusu began work as a teacher but taught for only a short while before going back to study theology. After theological education, she was commissioned as a Deaconess and posted to Tamale to assist the missionaries in chaplaincy work in the hospitals. She worked in chaplaincy in the following areas: Bawku, Bolgatanga and Sandema alongside the German missionary nurses who were visiting rural areas and offering medical care, especially to women.

Ofori-Owusu was posted to Atlanta, Georgia in 1977 as a Missionary. She was the first Missionary from the Third World in the Presbytery of Atlanta (Adasi 2016, 99). This was such sensational news that it attracted the attention of mainstream media and the Head of State at the time, Col. I. K. Acheampong, who invited her to the Castle. Ofori-Owusu was commissioned by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) as a minister of the gospel so that she could go to Atlanta as a much

more defined representative of the PCG. Again, in this, she broke ground as she became the first female to be commissioned as a minister in the PCG. She was commissioned by Rev. G. K. Sintim-Misa, the then Moderator of the PCG in 1977.

When she came back from Atlanta Georgia, she was ordained by Rev. I. H. Frimpong in 1979. Her initial postings were all in the area of chaplaincy, first to Agogo Training College, then to Agogo Presbyterian Hospital, then to Dormaa Ahenkro Presby Hospital as per the decision of the Synod that time (Kwamena-Poh 2011, 343). She was then posted to Akosombo to be in charge of a congregation for the first time in her work in the ordained ministry of the church and eventually became the first District Minister of the new Akosombo District from 1982–1984. From Akosombo she also worked as District Minister for Winneba (1984–90), Agona Swedru (1990–1994), Old Tafo Nkawie (2002–2004) and Nsuatre (2004–2008) where she went on pension in 2008. She professes to facing no peculiar challenges as a female ordained minister because she gave due respect to everyone that she worked with including the various Sessions (congregational and district leadership boards).

Rev. Dora was the first female to take the reins of the District Minister role in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and remained the only female in that role for 22 years until 2006 when another three joined her.

‘This means that for 36 years the PCG appointed only four out of 75 ordained women as district ministers’ (as of 2011 (Adasi 2016, 88)).

While Rev. Dora does not believe she faced any peculiar challenges, the fact that for 36 years the PCG had only four female district ministers speaks volumes of the levels of patriarchy that existed/exists in the church. She was the only female in the role of district minister for 22 years. These were issues that the Circle was grappling with at the time of its formation. Unfortunately, these are still the same issues that the churches continue to experience. Church leadership remains a male-dominated space. Regardless of this, Dora performed other roles, among them, she served as a government representative on the District Security Council of Winneba and Agona Swedru between 1987–1994 and member of the Regional Peace Advisory Council at Sunyani from 2002–2006.

Participation in the Circle Formation

Mercy Amba Oduyoye extended an invitation to Ofori-Owusu as she was in the ordained ministry at the time and she held the added nuance of being the first female commissioned minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. It was indeed no surprise that Ofori-Owusu was extended an invitation to the meeting that served as the birthing of the Circle with such a position. In Oduyoye’s own words,

‘How many African women were in this predicament of being the sole woman among men theologians. I decided that I had to find these women.’ (2001).

Ofori-Owusu chaired the official opening of the 1989 meeting held at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Church of Resurrection in Accra Ghana (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 2001, 264). At this time, Ofori-Owusu was the District Pastor at Winneba. Even though Ofori-Owusu has not been very active in the Circle after the first meeting, her work and struggles continue to reflect the ideals of the Circle such as being a woman navigating a workspace reserved for men. Having been ordained into full ministry in the church and then going ahead to break the glass ceiling from being considered only for chaplaincy work into congregational ministry and even heading districts (a group of congregations). Ofori-Owusu did not publish any works but there is a quote that is often on her lips that aptly describes her will and resolve in ordained ministry.

‘aburow nko, na dokono nko?’

To wit

‘Is the substance of *kenkey* (a Ghanaian corn food usually eaten with sauce) different from the dough it is made from?’

Sums up the driving force behind her contributions to women’s participation in church life and ministry (Ofori-Owusu 2022). By this statement, she asserts that all human beings were born of a woman, both male and female, so there is no way one can be clean and fit for the ordained ministry and the other not. If both male and female were born of a woman and came out of a woman, it means that if the woman is unclean and unfit, then the man that comes out of her cannot be clean and fit either.

Ofori-Owusu’s major theological ideas center around community/communal living. Rev. Ofori-Owusu believes in the communal family system of indigenous Ghana and other African countries. She credits her education to the fact that her family was communal and her uncle sent her to school after the death of her father. For her, Christ commanded his disciples to love one another and the love and community that existed within the extended family system was a place where one could experience the love of God in totality; a love without conditions or without divisions. In such a community setting, everyone belonged and everyone worked for everybody’s benefit. For example, she observes,

‘as a child growing up in my native Berekum, when I was hungry, it didn’t matter that my mother was not around, I could just walk into an aunt’s kitchen and if there was food, I could have some. There was no sense of not belonging there’ (Ofori-Owusu 2022).

Ofori-Owusu pays tribute to this by being called both by her father’s name, Owusu and her uncle’s name, Ofori.

Everyone is worthy before God: God is not a God of favoritism; God sends whom he needs at what time he needs them. Jesus declared, ‘Let the little children come to me’, without reservations and when the children came, whether they were

male or female did not matter, he placed whoever would come in his arms and blessed them. Similarly, all the children of God are entreated to be allowed to come to Christ without recourse to their gender. Ofori-Owusu was committed to this call and made a conscious effort to conscientise everyone whether male or female to this call, which cannot be hindered by gender stereotypes. Adasi (2016, 99) quoted Ofori-Owusu as follows:

‘I didn’t come here to teach sewing, taking care of babies or boiling water. Why I came is to tell you that the Lord has need for each one of us.’

It is similar consciousness that roused Mercy Amba Oduyoye to think up the idea of *The Circle* (Oduyoye 2001). Rev. Dora Ofori-Owusu has probably produced many sermons and teaching material throughout the lifetime of her work as an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana but unfortunately has not had any publications.

Lessons from Her Life for the Way Forward

Ofori-Owusu has had a life of many firsts; she is a pioneer in her own right and it is satisfying for her to also be named among the pioneers of the Circle. As one who has pioneered many things in her lifetime, especially being the first commissioned minister of the PCG, Ofori-Owusu continues to inspire women even in her old age when many would be minding their own lives. She is first to cheer at another female being commissioned or ordained and still recognises that the struggle is not over and it would take many more links to the chain to get there. Members of the Circle either of old or in contemporary times can never relent or become tired of the ongoing struggle. Again, Ofori-Owusu stood alone without fear and bore the torch of female District Minister alone for 22 years before she had contemporaries but she was not afraid to stand alone. Circle members today should not be afraid to stand alone and bear the torch in uncharted areas to show the way to other women that it is possible. And remember while in that position to push for more women to come along and join them, to petition all structures concerned for the need for and importance of having more women in such positions. Being alone in positions where other African women were needed is what led Mercy Amba Oduyoye to seek out all African women who were ordained ministers or studying in seminaries and universities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life and contributions of Ofori-Owusu within the context of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians illuminate profound insights and lessons for the ongoing pursuit of gender equity and theological empowerment within African religious communities. Born into a communal family structure, Ofori-Owusu’s upbringing instilled in her a deep appreciation for community and inclusivity, values that permeate her theological convictions and ministerial

endeavours. Her journey from elementary education facilitated by her uncle to theological training and eventual ordination as the first female district minister in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana exemplifies a pioneering spirit and unwavering commitment to breaking gender barriers within church leadership. Ofori-Owusu's participation in the formation of the Circle, despite her limited subsequent involvement, underscores the significance of her presence as a trailblazer and representative of African women navigating male-dominated theological spaces.

Her theological ideas centered around communal living and inclusivity resonate deeply with the ethos of the Circle, emphasising the imperative of dismantling gender stereotypes and fostering environments where all individuals are empowered to fulfill their divine calling. Moreover, Ofori-Owusu's steadfast determination and willingness to stand alone as a female district minister for 22 years exemplify the courage and resilience required to effect meaningful change within entrenched patriarchal structures. Her legacy serves as a beacon of inspiration for current and future generations of Circle members, urging them to continue the struggle for gender equity and theological inclusivity with unwavering resolve and collective action. As we reflect on Ofori-Owusu's life and contributions, we are reminded of the ongoing challenges and the imperative of collective action in advancing the cause of gender equity and theological empowerment within African religious communities. Her pioneering spirit, commitment to inclusivity and unwavering resolve serve as guiding lights for the way forward, inspiring us to persevere in the pursuit of justice, equality and dignity for all.

Bibliography

- Adasi, G.S. *Gender and Change: Roles and Challenges of Ordained Women Ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana*. Accra: GAVOSS, 2016.
- Kwamena-Poh, M.A. *Vision and Achievement: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "The Story of a Circle." *The Ecumenical Review* 53, no. 1 (2001): 97-100. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A71190358/AONE?u=anon~c53323c8&sid=googleScholar&xxid=fc5ebe07>
- Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A. *Talitha Qumi, Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*. Accra-North: SWL Press, 2001.
- Ofori-Owusu, D. Interview by author. January 27, 2022.

Chapter 51

THE STORY OF REVEREND MABEL SELMA ANKU MORNY

Rachel Pauline Aikins

Introduction

In this chapter, I will delve into the life and contributions of Reverend Mrs Mabel Selma Anku Morny, a prominent figure in the realm of academia and religious ministry. Reverend Morny emerged as a foundational figure in the establishment of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, playing a pivotal role in its inception and subsequent activities. Born on 20 Jan 1946, in Avatime-Gbadzeme, Volta Region, Ghana, Morny's journey traverses through the realms of education, religious leadership and advocacy for women's empowerment. Her formative years were marked by a steadfast commitment to education, culminating in her graduation from the Presbyterian Training College, Akropong and subsequent academic pursuits in religion at the University of Ghana. Deepening her theological knowledge, Morny pursued further studies at Trinity Theological Seminary, where she was ordained as a Reverend Minister in 1988.

Throughout her career, Morny has held various roles within the educational and religious spheres, serving as a teacher, chaplain and district pastor, among others. Her unwavering dedication to advancing women's rights and theological discourse led her to become a prominent member of the Circle, where she championed initiatives to empower women and elevate their voices in theological discourse. Morny's profound insights into gender equality and liberation theology are evidenced in her writings and advocacy efforts, which underscore the imperative of dismantling systemic barriers to women's advancement. Despite facing health challenges in recent years, Morny's enduring legacy continues to inspire generations of scholars, activists and religious leaders committed to promoting gender justice and social equity.

Birth and Education

Reverend Mrs Mabel Selma Anku Morny is a minister of God in the Evangelical Presbyterian (E.P.) Church. A Ghanaian national and a native of Avatime-Gbadzeme in the Volta Region of Ghana, Morny was among the 70 women who launched the Circle in 1989 in Legon Ghana. She is, therefore, a founding Mother of the Circle, an organisation whose mandate is to promote research, writing, publishing and supporting the empowerment of African women in the academic field to inspire their theological quest. She was born on 20 January 1946 to Mr Evans Theodore Anku and Mrs Elizabeth Adobor Anku in the Volta Region. Morny completed her basic education at Gbadzeme Evangelical Presbyterian (E.P.) Primary. After completing Middle School in 1958, she went to Hohoe E.P. Secondary School where she obtained GCE' O' level Certification around 1962. She later gained admission to Presbyterian Training College (PTC), Akropong and Graduated with an 'A' grade on her certificate as a professional post-secondary teacher in 1965.

Her academic endeavours spurred her to study religion at the University of Ghana where she was awarded a Diploma in Religious Studies. Her passion for knowledge and spirituality spurred her on further to Trinity Theological Seminary for spiritual training and formation in 1987. She successfully completed her degree in 1988 and was commissioned in that same year, becoming the third female Reverend Minister to be ordained by the Evangelical Presbyterian (E.P.) Church in 1988. Morny's hard work earned her incredible job opportunities across different spheres of the academic and religious terrain. In 1990, Lancaster Theological Seminary in the United States recognised her significant contribution to women's development, theology and research and offered her a scholarship to advance her academic interest in the area of Master of Arts in Theology (Adzei 2023).

Work Life

Rev. Morny commenced her work life when she was first posted as a teacher at the then Amedzofe Training College, now Amedzofe College of Education. After a year of teaching at the Training College, she was transferred to Vakpo Secondary School where her services were most needed. She continued on a transfer to her 'alma mater', Hohoe Secondary School. At Hohoe, she decided to do further studies. During her further studies, she had the calling to be trained as a minister of the gospel. Morny was later transferred to Kpando Secondary School with extra responsibilities as the school Chaplain after her commissioning as a minister and later to Awudome Secondary School where she retired from the Ghana Education Service to begin her full-time career as an ordained Reverend Minister with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana (Adzei 2023).

Due to her exceptional talents and leadership qualities, the E.P. Church posted Morny to Tsito Kekeli in the Volta Region as the District Pastor where she had oversight over four congregations. A few years later, she was transferred to Ashaiman District in the Greater Region with over five congregations under her

jurisdiction. As a District Pastor, she blended her natural abilities and spiritual qualities in the service of God and sought what was good for the congregations. Her understanding of the needs of women and children landed her a new job as the Women's Desk Officer (Director for Women's Work) in charge of women and gender issues at the Headquarters of the E.P. Church, Ho, for a period of three years.

She further served as the Treasurer and protected the financial interest of the Evangelical Presbyterian Pastors' National Association for more than half a decade. In her narration, Rev. Mrs Dr Bridget Ben-Naimah describes Morny as a special gift to humanity with great humour that provokes laughter to turn contentious situations into delight. Her personality is admirable, as she often exhibits professionalism, understanding and teamwork, supporting the welfare of others and upholding strong ethical standards (Ben-Naimah 2023). Morny was a member of the E.P. Church Disciplinary Committee, General Assembly and Standing Committee and a long-standing calendar review committee member. She also travelled extensively to the United States, Germany, Kenya, Togo and Nigeria to deliver lectures. Morny participated in conferences and has always been a voice for the marginalised and the vulnerable (Adzei 2023).

Journeying with the Circle

Given her passionate attempts to provide safe spaces for women and strengthen their voices to access opportunities, Morny was enthused to learn about the plans to establish the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians while studying at Trinity Theological Seminary in 1987. She soon became an active participant enthusiastically involved in the activities of the Circle from the outset before it was launched in 1989. Morny emerged as a pivotal figure among the group of pioneering women who initiated the establishment of the Circle in 1989 subsequent to her theological education. She defended and protected women's interests by embodying their struggles for equality showing the worth of women through her practical lifestyle and creating an enabling environment to support their talents. Morny's engagement in the Circle's initiatives bolstered her commitment to advocating for women's rights and prompted her efforts to advocate for the establishment of appropriate structures and systems conducive to advancing women's involvement in research, publication, decision-making and leadership roles.

She consistently empowered and provided substantial support to women both within and beyond the Circle, facilitating their financial, physical and economic empowerment to realise their utmost potential. Her major concerns for women were proactively recognising and supporting women theologians by creating the required environmental conditions needed for development. She became an international voice in terms of women's advocacy for the E.P. Church and the Circle. She represented both organisations at various theological consultations, ecumenical meetings and conferences at local and international levels. Notable among them

were Bremen Mission Women's Consultations and African Presbyterian/Reformed Women's Gathering held in Kigali, Rwanda. She seized the opportunity to educate people about the values of women to shape attitudes and curb the systemic and institutional abuse of women (Morny, interview 2023).

In her scholarly work titled, "God Restores Life," Morny asserts that Christ serves as the liberator for all individuals. Morny emphasises the significance of Christ's liberating work in the African context, particularly in light of the cultural, socio-economic and religio-political challenges faced by African women. This underscores the crucial role of Christ's liberation in addressing and alleviating the multifaceted struggles experienced by African women in various spheres of life (Morny 2001, 168–170). Liberation, according to Morny, should be seen as the removal of all that keeps the African woman in bondage; all that makes her less than what God intended her to be. Liberation, in this sense, connotes complete freedom from intimidation, depression, fear, hunger, abuse and oppression. Morny unequivocally submits that women's liberation involves the right to the social, economic and political status for women as it does for men.

The freedom of women ensures that they are not subjected to discrimination based on their gender or circumstances. Referencing Luke 4:18–19, Morny was emphatic that Christ's death unquestionably guarantees women's freedom. She stressed that women's reproductive role as wives and mothers had diminished importance. Discrimination in education, health facilities, job creation and income, contribute to their ineffectiveness in society (Morny 2001, 170). Until the second half of the 20th century, women in most societies were denied opportunities and political rights accorded to men but through Christ, their first estate was restored. In summary, Morny posits that women are no longer enslaved people who should be discriminated against; rather, they are striving to reclaim and recover their divine given role as God originally intended (Morny 2001, 171).

Morny's attitude is anchored and guided by cultural values and heritage, including self-worth, respect, community, human relations, spirituality, communication, ethics, hospitality and accountability. In fact, her involvement in the Circle contributed significantly to the highly acclaimed success of the Circle.

Morny exhibited exceptional service at numerous international, regional and national conferences, demonstrating distinction in her contributions. She is deemed as a voice for the marginalised and discriminated against and represents hope in times of despair. In the sequel to her activities, she worked with the E.P. Church and represented the Circle at various levels. While working at the E.P Church Headquarters, she travelled to Kenya in 2013 for a week-long conference on behalf of Circle. Of late she has taken ill and has since been unable to execute ministerial and Circle responsibilities. Although she is now inactive due to life-changing events, her principles, interests and concerns for the Circle remain evident. This was demonstrated during my brief interview with her in March 2023 (Adzei 2023).

My Interview with Rev. Mrs Morny

It was such a joy to behold and be ushered by the very person I had the honour to write about. The glow on her face was indescribable. Her faith in Christ is unfeigned. Her stance on the liberation of women and the work of the Circle is unwavering. When I sought her views on the adage “Women are their Own Enemies,”

She was adamant that anyone who says so has not delved deeply enough into the issues of women. She argued that women face different forms of abuse and need special attention to understand, assist and develop them. According to Morny, in some instances, violence becomes a tool for intimidation. Humiliation is often used to frighten women in order to make them powerless. Her ultimate request was that women who want to advocate for other women should understand the problems of women and make a conscious effort to redeem women from whatever shackles of bondage they find themselves in.

For her, addressing the needs of women requires focused attention. She avers that investments in the health, education and safety of women have ripple effects on their families, communities and future children. When women receive adequate attention, communities may experience relief from chronic health issues such as heart problems, high blood pressure and digestive disorders. This attention is crucial as women who experience abuse frequently develop post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder and mood-related challenges, which can have significant ramifications for their overall well-being (Morny 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Morny emerges as a pioneering figure in the realm of theology and women’s empowerment within the Evangelical Presbyterian (E. P.) Church, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and beyond. As one of the founding members of the Circle, her contributions have been instrumental in advancing the cause of African women in theological scholarship and societal engagement. Born and raised in the Volta Region of Ghana, Morny’s journey from her humble beginnings to becoming a revered minister and advocate for women’s rights exemplifies resilience, dedication and unwavering commitment. Her educational pursuits, spanning from primary school to advanced theological training, equipped her with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of academia and spirituality. Through her work as a teacher and later as a minister, she demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and a deep sense of compassion for those under her care.

Her extensive involvement in various capacities within the E.P. Church, including as a district pastor, women’s desk officer and treasurer, underscores her versatility and impact across different spheres of church life. Furthermore, her active engagement with the Circle highlights her relentless advocacy for gender equality, women’s empowerment and social justice. Morny’s scholarly

contributions, particularly her insightful work on the liberation of women through Christ, have enriched theological discourse and provided a theological framework for addressing the challenges faced by African women. Despite facing health challenges in recent years, Morny's legacy continues to inspire generations of theologians, activists and believers to champion the cause of women's rights and social transformation. Her unwavering dedication to creating inclusive spaces for women within the church and society at large serves as a beacon of hope and a testament to the transformative power of faith and activism. As we reflect on Morny's remarkable journey and contributions, we are reminded of the enduring importance of solidarity, advocacy and the pursuit of justice in building a more equitable and compassionate world.

Bibliography

- Adzei, S. "Biography of Rev. Mabel Morny." Interview by Rachel Pauline Aikins, March 24, 28, and 31, 2023.
- Ben-Naimah, B. "Biography of Rev. Mabel Morny." Interview by Rachel Pauline Aikins, March 28, 2023.
- Morny, M.S. "God Restores Life." In *Talitha, Qumi! Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro. Accra, Ghana: Sam Woode Ltd., 2001.
- Morny, M.S. "Autobiography of Rev. Mabel Morny." Interview by Rachel Pauline Aikins, March 31, 2023.

Chapter 52

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DR RABIATU DEINYO AMMAH: MULTI-FAITH APPROACH TO GENDER DISCOURSE

Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh

Introduction

The inception of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter referred to as ‘the Circle’) in 1989 marked a significant milestone in the discourse surrounding African women’s theological perspectives. The Circle emerged as a platform for intellectual exchange and activism centered on the intersections of faith, gender and societal transformation. Among its founding members stands Dr Rabiatu Deinyo Ammah, a prominent figure whose unique multi-faith background and scholarly contributions have greatly enriched the Circle’s endeavours. Ammah’s journey within the academic and religious spheres has been marked by a deep engagement with the complexities of interfaith dynamics and gender liberation. As a senior lecturer at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana, her scholarly pursuits have earned her accolades, including the prestigious Best Teacher Award for the 1999–2000 academic year.

Her academic trajectory, which includes earning her Diploma, Master and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees at the University of Birmingham, was influenced by the guidance of esteemed Christian ecumenist Prof. John S. Pobee. Raised in a family characterised by interfaith dynamics, Dr Ammah’s upbringing provided her with firsthand exposure to the plurality of religious beliefs prevalent in Ghanaian society. Her parents’ conversion from Christianity and African Indigenous Religions to Islam imbued her with a nuanced understanding of religious pluralism. This rich tapestry of experiences laid the groundwork for her later scholarly pursuits, particularly in fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. Ammah’s involvement in research projects such as the Madina research project underscores her commitment to exploring the historical and contemporary modalities of coexistence within multi-religious communities. Additionally, her advocacy efforts as a member of the Council of State of Ghana, where she championed peace during

electoral processes, exemplify her dedication to addressing societal challenges through religiously informed perspectives.

A Multi-Faith Circle and Dr Rabiātu Deinyo Ammah

The multi-faith composition of many Africans is attributable to the communal fabric inherent in African societies. These communities frequently encompass individuals of diverse religious persuasions, resulting in individuals holding multiple religious affiliations. Dr Rabiātu Deinyo Ammah's participation within the Circle underscores this multi-faith dynamic. Her inclusion not only fortifies the organisation's identity, which prides itself on being interreligious, ecumenical, interdisciplinary and intercultural but also expands its scope. While the majority of members adhere to both African Indigenous Religions and Christianity, Dr Ammah's presence contributes to the Circle's purview, transforming it into a multi-faith entity dedicated to advancing women's liberation and empowerment. This evolution highlights the Circle's commitment to addressing women's issues irrespective of religious orientation. Among the inaugural members of the first gathering of the Circle was Dr Rabiātu Deinyo Ammah. She is in all likelihood, the only Ghanaian Muslim present at the launch. This brief paper attempts to bring to the fore the contributions and celebrate the work of Dr Ammah to the success of the Circle and the Islamic community. Ammah is a senior lecturer at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana where she received the best teacher award for the 1999–2000 academic year and is a member of the editorial board of the *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology*. She studied for her Diploma, Master and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees at the University of Birmingham between 1982 and 1989 (University of Ghana 2023). Her studies at the University of Birmingham were motivated by Prof. John S. Pobee (Ammah 2014, 186), who was a Christian ecumenist. In addition to John Pobee serving as her mentor, her interest in an inter-faith or multi-faith relationship might be influenced by the religious background of her parents. She stated:

My parents were devout Muslim converts who both had Christian and traditional backgrounds. Additionally, the family was a mixed one; my paternal grandfather being an ecumenical Christian and a strong believer in the indigenous Ga religion known as 'Kpele'. The family was mixed and inter-faith relationships were the norm and taken for granted (Ammah 2014, 186).

Her parents were not born into the Islamic religion but were converted from Christianity and African Indigenous Religions into Islam. The phenomenon of inter-religious persons is not unique to the parents of Dr Ammah but to other persons in Ghana (Utrecht University 2023). This gives Dr Ammah a good experience of major religious faiths in Ghana. However, she did not realise it until her admission at the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Selly-Oak Colleges, Birmingham which, as the name implies, promotes inter-faith relations at both academic level and existential levels (Ammah 2014,186).

Many Ghanaians are multi-religious and live in communities with other religious persons even though there may be a dominant religious group. Ammah was among the eminent scholars selected to undertake the Madina research project. It was a five-year project starting in July 2017 to explore

‘the historical and contemporary modalities of this co-existence in the multi-religious and multi-ethnic suburb Madina, Accra’ (Utrecht University 2023).

Ammah had the opportunity to serve as a member of the Council of State of Ghana. The Council of State is a constitutional body that advises the president. She used her position to advocate for peace during elections. She said,

‘[i]t is important for everybody to know, whether you are a Muslim or not, that elections are not about fighting; it is about us deciding who becomes our leader. This, the Quran has taught us. I want to say to everybody, not only Muslims, that they should not incite violence, they should not allow themselves to be used for violent purposes’ (Ammah 2016).

Almost all elections during the 4th Republic in Ghana have been associated with violence of varied degrees. Often, the underprivileged persons living in Zongo communities where the Muslim population are dominant are used by politicians to incite violence. Ammah used her membership in the Council of State to deal with the national cancer of violence through elections. She did not limit the caution to only Muslims but extended it to members of other religious Faiths. The Federation of Muslim Woman Associations Ghana (FOMWAG) acknowledged her work as a member of the Council of State to promote elections without violence in Ghana (Somaliland Sun 2016).

The inclusion of Ammah within the Circle membership substantiated the group’s classification as a multi- and inter-faith religious entity. This acknowledgement was underscored by Oduyoye, the Circle’s founder who attested during an award acceptance speech to the presence of Dr Rabiatu Ammah, a Muslim woman, within their ranks. Oduyoye’s statement underscored the transformation of the Circle into a multi-faith community reflective of the broader religious diversity prevalent in Africa (Oduyoye 2008, 2). Establishing a multi-faith community holds significant potential for garnering interest from a broader audience and stakeholders, serving to reaffirm the Circle’s multi-faith nature and its commitment to interreligious, ecumenical, interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue. Ammah was a key participant in the African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference organised by the Circle between July 8–14, 2012, at Talitha Qumi Centre Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. The conference attracted participants from other continents and was well attended by the Circle members particularly in Ghana and Africa generally. She read some Quranic scriptures on “We Remember the Ancestors” (Conference Programme 2012, 14).

The major contribution of Ammah to the Circle is the Islamic discourse of gender liberation and empowerment that she subscribes to. This is one of the core

objectives of the Circle to enhance women's welfare issues from varied religious backgrounds in Africa. The involvement of Ammah strengthens the study of gender issues in religion from a multi-faith approach for effective and wider impact. Since the Circle is interreligious, ecumenical, intercultural and interdisciplinary, the Islamic component that Ammah brings to the Circle clearly speaks to observers that the Circle is a multi-faith association. Ammah's efforts to contribute to the discourse on Islam within the Circle have the capacity to inspire individuals from diverse faith backgrounds to engage with the Circle regarding their own religious beliefs.

Conclusion

The formation of The Circle marked a pivotal moment in the discourse concerning African women's theological perspectives. Serving as a platform for intellectual exchange and activism at the nexus of faith, gender and societal transformation, the Circle has been significantly shaped by the contributions of Ammah, a distinguished scholar and advocate. Ammah's multifaceted background, steeped in a rich tapestry of interfaith dynamics has been instrumental in advancing the Circle's objectives. Her academic accomplishments, including her tenure as a senior lecturer at the University of Ghana and her prestigious teaching accolades, underscore her commitment to rigorous scholarship and educational excellence. Influenced by esteemed mentors like Prof. John S. Pobee, Ammah's journey has been guided by a profound engagement with interfaith dialogue and gender liberation, fuelled by her upbringing in a family characterised by religious pluralism. Ammah's involvement in research initiatives such as the Madina project and her advocacy efforts within the Council of State of Ghana demonstrate her dedication to exploring and addressing societal challenges through religiously informed perspectives.

Moreover, her participation in the Circle has not only affirmed its multi-faith character but has also broadened its scope, transforming it into a dynamic platform that champions women's liberation and empowerment across diverse religious traditions. Ammah's contributions to the Circle, particularly in fostering Islamic discourse on gender liberation and empowerment, resonate deeply with the organisation's ethos of interreligious, ecumenical, interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue. Ammah's presence within the Circle serves as a beacon, inspiring individuals from diverse faith backgrounds to engage with the organisation and contribute to its mission. In essence, Ammah's multifaceted contributions epitomise the Circle's commitment to fostering inclusive dialogue and advancing the welfare of women across Africa's diverse religious landscape. As the Circle continues to evolve and expand its reach, Ammah's legacy will endure as a testament to the transformative power of interfaith collaboration and scholarship in promoting gender justice and social change.

Bibliography

- Address to the E.H. Johnson Award Luncheon. "Dr. Mercy Oduyoye, Founder, Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Recipient of the 2008 E.H. Johnson Award." Ottawa, Ontario, 2008.
- African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference. Conference Programme. Legon, Ghana: Talitha Qumi Centre Trinity Theological Seminary, July 8-14, 2012.
- Ammah, R.D. "And They Must Also Call unto the Way of the Lord Wisdom': The Perspective of a Muslim Woman on African Women in Inter-Faith Encounters." In *Trajectories of Religion in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Pobee*, edited by Cephas Omenyo and Eric Anum, 185–202. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2014.
- Ammah, R.D. "Christian-Muslim Relationship in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa." *Islam-Christian Relations* 18, no. 2 (2007): 139–153.
- Ammah, R.D. "Don't Allow Politicians to Use You to Engage in Violence." *Peace FM Online*, January 21, 2016. <https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/news/201601/265992.php?storyid=100&>.
- Ammah, R.D. "Islam, Gender and Leadership in Ghana." *CrossCurrents* 63, no. 2 (2013): 227–257.
- Ammah, R.D. "Paradise Lies at the Feet of Muslim Women." In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 74–88. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992.
- Religious Matters in an Entangled World*. "Madina Project." Utrecht University, 2023. <https://religiousmatters.nl/projects/madina/>.
- Somaliland Sun*. "21st Century Salute." 2016. <https://somalilandsun.com/21st-century-salute/>.
- University of Ghana. "Rabiatu Deinyo Ammah." Department of Religions, 2023. <https://www.ug.edu.gh/religions/staff/rabiatu-deinyo-ammah>.

Chapter 53

ARABA ATA SAMA: A LOVEABLE CHRISTIAN

Grace Anning

Introduction

The life and contributions of Mrs Araba Atta Sam, affectionately known as Auntie Araba, epitomise a remarkable journey of service, dedication and faith. Born into a family rich in heritage and commitment to education and community, Sam's trajectory from her early years in Accra to her esteemed roles within the Methodist Church and beyond exemplifies a steadfast devotion to social justice, education and women's empowerment. Sam's educational journey began at the Adabraka Methodist School and continued through Wesley Girls' High School where she exhibited exemplary leadership as a Bellamy House Prefect and actively participated in various student organisations. Her pursuit of higher education culminated in a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography from the University of Ghana, Legon, followed by a study tour in the United States during the International Women's Year where she obtained a Certificate in African Educators' Programme. Throughout her career as an educator and administrator, Sam's commitment to the Methodist Church and ecumenical movements remained unwavering.

Her roles as a teacher, assistant headmistress and later, in numerous leadership capacities within the Methodist Church, including the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, showcased her tireless advocacy for women's rights and her dedication to advancing the church's mission. Furthermore, Sam's involvement in The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians reflects her broader commitment to social justice and women's empowerment. As a founding member and influential figure within the Circle, Sam played a pivotal role in creating a space for African women to engage in theological discourse, academic scholarship and leadership development. Her contributions, alongside those of other Circle founders and members continue to resonate in academic theology and faith-based organisations, inspiring future generations of women leaders. In this chapter, we explore the life, work and enduring legacy of Mrs Araba Atta Sam, a beacon of hope, faith and empowerment within the Methodist

Church, the Circle and beyond. Through her remarkable journey, Sam exemplifies the transformative power of faith, education and advocacy in advancing social justice and women's rights in Africa and beyond. This chapter uses the interview with the current presiding Bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church West Africa (Dogbe 2022).

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

The Circle is a Pan-African, interreligious and ecumenical academic association comprising diverse women scholars, writers and religious leaders from various religious backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, genders, races, classes, ages and locations within academia, faith organisations and African diasporas. Established in 1989 at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana, the Circle was founded by 70 women who convened to address the challenges faced by African women, particularly examining the influence of religion and culture on women's lives. Recognising the complex and often oppressive relationship between women, religion and culture, the Circle emerged as a liberation movement dedicated to researching, writing and publishing materials on the intersections of religion, culture, gender and faith-based institutions. Central to its mandate is the encouragement of women's participation in the study of religion and theology to assume leadership roles within faith-based institutions for social transformation, with mentorship serving as a pivotal strategy. The Circle's vision underscores its commitment to advancing the rights and empowerment of African women through scholarly engagement and advocacy (The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians website 2021).

Birth and Upbringing of Mrs Araba Atta Sama

Sama, fondly referred to as Auntie Araba was born a twin in Accra according to the interview with Bishop Dr Hilliard K.D. Dogbe on 2 Feb 1943 to the late Mr Emmanuel Wolseley Prah of the Owrenkyen Royal family of Assin Kushea. Her mother is the late Mrs Flora Prah, a dedicated girl guide from Komenda. Following her father's passing at the age of seven, she relocated with her mother and siblings to Sekondi. Demonstrating a steadfast commitment to Methodism, Sam has been happily married to Mr Cramer Welsing Sam (Uncle Ebo) and together they have four children. Recognised for her devout Christian faith and exemplary service in various capacities within the Methodist Church, the Circle and broader society, Sam has earned the endearing title of 'A Lovable Christian.' Her profound knowledge, eloquence in preaching and ability to inspire others have been instrumental in fostering love and compassion within the church community, translating her teachings into actionable practices (Dogbe 2022).

Educational Training

Sam commenced her educational journey at the Adabraka Methodist School at the age of five, subsequently advancing to ‘Sister Rose’s school for Standard One. She pursued her primary education until successfully passing the Common Entrance Examination leading to her enrolment at Wesley Girls’ High School in 1954 (Dogbe 2022). At Wesley Girls, she demonstrated academic excellence and leadership qualities, serving as the Bellamy House Prefect and Assistant School Prefect. Additionally, she held prominent roles as the Secretary to the Students’ Christian Movement (SCM) and President of the United Nations Students’ Association. Sam’s pursuit of education continued at the University of Ghana, Legon, where she graduated in 1966 with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Geography. In 1975, amidst the International Women’s Year, she seized the opportunity to partake in a study tour of the United States, culminating in her receipt of a Certificate in the African Educators’ Programme at George Washington University, Washington DC (Dogbe 2022).

Work History

In her career as a teacher, Sam taught Geography and English Literature at Technology Secondary School (KNUST), Kumasi between 1967 and 1969. In 1976, she was appointed the Acting Assistant Headmistress of the Accra High School. Given her love for the church, Sam served the church and ecumenical bodies in various capacities. From 1988, she served in various roles in the Methodist Church, including being the Bible Class Leader. From 1995–2000, Sam was a member of the World Day of Prayer Committee. From 1988–2005, she was in the Council of Women’s Committee where she chaired programmes and gave talks on the role of women in the church. Between 1998 and 2008 she was appointed to serve as the Ghana Emmaus Community in various capacities. This included serving as Board Secretary, Community Lay Director and Ghana Emmaus Board member. Sam went on to become the Vice President, West African Area of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women in 2008. Between 2004 and 2007, Sam was a Lay Chairperson for the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church. From 2008–2011 she became a Lay President for the church. She also became the Chairperson of the Editorial Board of the Christian Sentinel (Dogbe 2022). Most of the articles she wrote, especially in the Christian Sentinel, sought to encourage people (society) to work in the Lord’s vineyard. Sam became a member of the Board of Accra Wesley Girls from 2004 to this day.

Sam Araba’s Role in the Circle

Sam made significant contributions to various domains including education and other social endeavors. Her involvement extended to the advancement of the vision and expansion of the Circle and church ecumenical movements. Sam’s

engagement with women within the church context prompted her participation in the Circle, where her impact was immeasurable in facilitating the empowerment and development of women. Collaborating with other founders and members of the Circle, she played a pivotal role in establishing a platform for African women to assert their voices and progress in academic theology and leadership within faith institutions. The pioneering efforts of the Circle's founders have set a precedent for future generations of women, ensuring their continued contributions to African theology. Through their collective dream, vision and strategic planning, the founders have laid the groundwork for the celebration of social justice across generations within the African continent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life and legacy of Sam, fondly known as Auntie Araba, exemplify a journey marked by unwavering dedication to service and faith. From her upbringing in Accra to her distinguished roles within the Methodist Church and the Circle, Sam embodied a commitment to social justice, education and women's empowerment. Her educational journey, starting from Adabraka Methodist School to Wesley Girls' High School and eventually the University of Ghana, Legon, showcased her academic prowess and leadership acumen. Throughout her career as an educator and church leader, Sam's tireless advocacy for women's rights and her active involvement in various capacities within the Methodist Church underscores her commitment to advancing the church's mission. Additionally, her instrumental role in the Circle epitomises her broader commitment to social justice and women's empowerment, laying the groundwork for future generations of women leaders. Through her remarkable journey, Sam remains a beacon of hope, faith and empowerment, inspiring transformative change within African theology and faith-based organisations for generations to come.

Bibliography

Interview with Bishop Dr Hilliard K. D. Dogbe, December 1, 2022.

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. 2021. "The History of the Circle." <https://circle.org.za/>. [Accessed May 2022]

Chapter 54

‘CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT OF WORK’: REMEMBERING THE LIFE AND WORK OF REV. ROSE AKUA AMPOFO

Grace Adasi

Introduction

In this short chapter, the life and work of Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo are told. However, no write-up, however long, can ever tell the story of the indefatigable Mama Rose. Fondly nicknamed the ‘Superintendent of Work’, Ampofo’s life revolved around her work and fight for the emancipation of women. Her efforts have been interpreted as geared towards the awakening and realisation of women’s indispensable participation in the call to worship and serve. Her theology of love and service to humankind marks her as a unique gem among her peers. Among other important undertakings, Ampofo stood as a woman who harmoniously and seamlessly married the often-difficult task of service, pragmatism and compassion, leading to her tireless advocacy for women’s recognition and total empowerment, generally and specifically in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

An Overcomer

Ampofo’s friend and academic sister, Esther-Ofei-Aboakye rightly eulogised her as “Rose was an overcomer.”

This is an apt description of the life and works of Ampofo. Against all odds, she rose to become the first ordained woman Presbyterian minister. Born into a difficult childhood in 1948, she was from a poor background and was thus raised by a kind foster family in Kyebi. She made it to the Presbyterian Training College at Akropong where she passed well as a teacher. She then went on to be trained as a catechist in Scotland and in 1990, she underwent special ministerial training at the Ramseyer Training Centre at Abetifi, which led to her ordination as the first Presbyterian woman minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Adasi 2016). Ampofo worked in different capacities as a teacher, as a missionary, as the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Women’s Fellowship, General Secretary of the

Women's Work Central Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and many more. It was during her time as General Secretary that she used her position to start the Abokobi Women's Centre. Mama Rose's work came to affect the lives of both women and men in many ways (Adasi 2016).

The Chief Superintendent of Work

Ampofo's life was guided by a single principle: Service. She was unreservedly a firm believer in helping people wherever and however one could help. She was particularly engrossed with the well-being of women, especially their subordinate position in society. She contended that the attainment of completeness in the manifestation of the word of God within humanity and society would remain elusive as long as women endured oppression and confronted the constraints imposed by cultural and religious norms. It was this love and desire to make society a haven for women that led to her long-driven work for gender equality. One of her most significant works as an ordained minister was in her urban and industrial mission in 1985. As a minister of the gospel, her primary work here was sharing the good news with the workers and imparting the Presbyterian doctrine of hard work. This she achieved through the regular morning devotions and Bible studies. It was also part of her ministerial work to provide counselling for the workers. This service was quite essential to their family life and work balance as she provided the space for the workers to air their concerns and get counselling for personal issues which could impede their work life (Adasi 2021). Ampofo was quick to identify the need to actively organise seminars for female factory workers on issues such as single parenthood, adolescence, environmental improvement and other empowering trainings. In undertaking such actions, Ampofo occupied a crucial niche often overlooked in the sphere of factory labour, with a particular emphasis on the welfare of female workers. Her dedication to enhancing the well-being of individuals within her purview, particularly women, emerged as a central tenet in the ethos and endeavours of Ampofo (Adasi 2016).

Ampofo was unique in her recognition that the improvement of women's lives could happen by paying critical attention to both the practical and strategic needs of women. In addressing women's strategic needs and requirements, she observed that a method of alleviating the challenges faced by women involved confronting entrenched cultural traditions such as widowhood rites. For years, one of the most haunting experiences of widows was the numerous dehumanising rites and practices that they were subjected to after the death of their spouses. All over Africa, negative widowhood rights continue to be an albatross around women's necks. Women are forced by society to undergo gruesome widowhood practices in the name of culture. It is quite unfortunate that women of all creeds have to suffer inhumane practices such as sleeping with the body of their dead spouse, drinking water used in bathing the corpse and sometimes undergoing days without food, bathing or decent attire, among other untold practices. Women are often suspected

of having a hand in the demise of their husbands and the ensuing struggle for acquired properties between the widow and the man's family often results in tense relationships and sometimes the desire by the family to force the woman to undergo health-jeopardising and psychologically-abusive practices (Adasi 2016).

Ampofo's desire to lighten the burden of women, especially women of the Presbyterian creed led to her design of a liturgy for widowhood rites for use in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The liturgy which she drafted continues to be in use by the church to date. What is quite interesting about this development is its forward-looking nature and the practicality of the approach. Realising that women were a part of the society and products of these societies, Ampofo did not call for an outright abolition of the rituals as most advocates are tempted to do. She was also able to recognise that for some women, the performance of these rituals also meant closure and eventual release from what is culturally believed to be an enduring spiritual bond between husband and wife. She sought ways to modify the rituals and make them more humane, Christian and thus acceptable and convenient for, especially women. It is also worth noting that while she sought changes in the lives of widows, she never married. Her desire to change the status quo was therefore not about securing for herself an abusive-free future, should she become a widow but rather her compassionate and selfless nature to simply improve the lives of others (Adasi 2016).

Perhaps, the defining moment in the life of Ampofo was the establishment of the Abokobi Women's Centre. One would not be wrong in making the brazen claim that the centre and what it stood for was the crust of her life's toil, for the story of the life of Ampofo cannot be effectively narrated without mention of the Abokobi Women's Centre. Ampofo used her position and connections to gather funds and lobbied effectively for the synod to assent to and contribute towards the establishment of the Abokobi Women's Centre in 1999. She effectively ran the centre with the assistance of her colleague Gertrude Beller, a German. The express aim of the centre was and continues to be the provision of a space that offers a variety of training programmes that empower women, especially in the area of communication and business skills (Adasi 2016). She firmly believed in the power of education to change the lives of women and children, noting that

Education is something which no one can take away from you. It gives you self-esteem. If you have an education, you can earn money and are less dependent upon your husband (Knispel & Kwakye 2006, 105).

She was so passionate about creating such a space for women that she readily offered her personal effects such as a refrigerator to start the establishment and to keep it running (Adasi 2016).

Subsequently, the Centre evolved into a quintessential embodiment of women's empowerment, extending its facilities to accommodate a diverse array of workshops, seminars and training sessions tailored for women and girls. Noteworthy figures, including the former First Lady of the nation, Mrs Agyeman Rawlings were hosted

for events such as women's retreats thereby enhancing the Centre's prominence as a hub for advancing gender equality initiatives. Ampofo herself held various empowerment programmes on topics such as education, health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental sustainability, farming techniques, family life education, training of adult trainers and awareness creation on negative practices such as widowhood rites and violence against women and children. The effect of the Centre's work continues to be felt the world.

Until her untimely death in 2003, Ampofo gave her very last breath to fulfilling her call to help others. She died on a mission to Peru (Adasi 2016).

Rose Ampofo's Legacy

The life of Ampofo was driven by a single theology: *Humans deserve sympathy*. Her belief in the simple but often forgotten fact that women are humans and deserve the fullness of life was what motivated her. Her beliefs and practices resonated with the theology of the Circle for Concern African Theologians. Her practices were rooted in the belief that faith without works is dead. She was a proactive gender activist who recognised the need to improve the living conditions of women. For Ampofo, an improvement in the lives of women was the only way through which the fullness of 'man' could be achieved. Women are active partakers of the kingdom and must be provided the same opportunities and spaces to serve their Maker. Ampofo confronted cultural and theological stands and practices which seek to prevent women's full participation in worship and articulates clearly, the African feminist's theology of God's plan being both male and female-centred in achieving God's will. She expressly understood the need for the total emancipation of women for them to attain the fullness of God's intended purposes in their lives. These beliefs and her intense desire spurred Ampofo on until her very last breath. The practicality with which she balanced theological positions and real-life problems and challenges propelled her to do more than was required in order to make the world a better place, especially for women. No wonder she earned the nickname "The Superintendent of Work" (Adasi 2016).

Ampofo will forever be remembered as a woman who did not just feed the souls of her congregants and anyone she came into contact with but as a woman who was genuinely concerned with their physical well-being and personal development. Through her hard work and intense commitment, she was able to lead the establishment of the Abokobi Women's Centre, which continues to serve as an important place in promoting women and the Presbyterian mission. She was unabashedly the champion of women's rights and well-being and she lit a big torch for others to uphold. A big light that never quenches, a torch that continues to burn in Abokobi. In recognition of her service and life, an annual lecture dubbed 'Reverend Rose Akua Ampofo Memorial Lectures' was instituted at Abokobi by the women's wing of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Adasi 2016).

Mama Rose
For you were here for a while
The grass is green where you watered
Your mustard seed
Now a shade for all the birds
While we can, we will serve
Na Onipa ye mɔbo

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life and work of Ampofo epitomise a remarkable dedication to the advancement of women's rights and empowerment within the context of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and society at large. Reverend Ampofo's unwavering commitment to service, compassion and pragmatism, underscored by her theology of love and gender equality, positioned her as a trailblazer and advocate for women's recognition and empowerment. Her pioneering initiatives, including the establishment of the Abokobi Women's Centre and her advocacy against detrimental cultural practices such as widowhood rites, as well as her membership and participation in the Circle exemplify her enduring legacy as a tireless champion of gender equity. Through her profound impact on the lives of countless individuals and her lasting contributions to the advancement of women's rights, Ampofo leaves behind a legacy of compassion, empowerment and social transformation.

Bibliography

- Adasi, G.S. "The Ghanaian PCG Tent Women Clergy as Revolutionaries." *Black Women and Religious Cultures* 1, no. 1 (2016).
- Adasi, G.S. *Gender and Change: Roles and Challenges of Ordained Women Ministers in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana*. Accra: GAVOSS Education Plc. Ltd., 2016.
- Knispel, M. and N.O. Kwakye. *Pioneers of the Faith: Biographical Studies from Ghanaian Church History*. Akropong: Akuapem Presbytery Press, 2006.
- "Rose Akua Ampofo: First Female Ghanaian Presbyterian Minister." PeoplePill. Accessed January 20, 2022. <https://peoplepill.com/people/rose-akua-ampofo>.

Chapter 55

THE PIONEERING JOURNEY OF REBECCA GANUSAH: A TRAILBLAZING MATRIARCH OF THE CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs

Jackline Makena Mutuma

Introduction

As a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Ganusah has significantly contributed to the discourse on religion, gender and societal transformation in Africa. Her unwavering dedication to amplifying women's voices and reshaping theological discourses underscores her pivotal role within the Circle, where her presence reverberates with transformative energy. This research endeavours to explore various facets of Ganusah's life and work, encompassing her background, her engagement with the Circle, her educational journey and her scholarly publications.

Upbringing and Education

Ganusah's early life in Vane-Avetime, Ghana, set the foundation for her journey of academic and intellectual pursuits. Though specifics regarding her upbringing and family background remain elusive, her commitment to education became evident as she progressed through her studies. Ganusah obtained her initial education in Ghana before embarking on a remarkable academic journey that led her to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, where she earned her PhD in Religious Studies. With a robust background in education, Ganusah ventured into teaching, ultimately reaching university-level instruction. Her scholarly focus on religion and morality in African society, particularly pertaining to women's issues, culminated in numerous publications, including her seminal work, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood* (Ganusah 2008).

Work History

Ganusah's career trajectory reflects her commitment to bridging academia with advocacy. Commencing as a secondary school teacher in Ghana, she delved into research at the intersection of religion, morality and women's issues, paving the way for her subsequent academic pursuits. Furthering her theological education at the University of Birmingham, Ganusah returned to Ghana, where she transitioned into a full-time lecturer at the University of Ghana. Her prolific scholarship sheds light on the ways religion perpetuates gender inequities, advocating for a theology that empowers women in religious leadership roles. Beyond academia, Ganusah engaged in advocacy endeavours, advocating for gender equality and social justice in Ghana and across Africa. She has collaborated with women's organisations to advance economic empowerment and has championed the rights of marginalised communities in Ghana. Her community engagement reflects her dedication to leveraging her expertise and knowledge for a positive impact on the lives of Ghanaians (Gyasi and Amissah 2020, 17).

Ganusah's Participation in the Circle Formation

The Circle was established with the aim of providing a platform for African women theologians to express their perspectives and confront the dominant patriarchal norms present within the church (Oduyoye 1989). As a founding member of the Circle, Ganusah played a pivotal role in shaping its theological framework and advocacy agenda. The Circle emerged in response to the marginalisation of African women theologians within patriarchal theological discourses dominated by male perspectives. Ganusah's contributions to the Circle centred on amplifying women's voices and challenging patriarchal norms entrenched within African Christianity. Her emphasis on integrating traditional African beliefs with feminist perspectives underscored the Circle's commitment to promoting gender parity within religious contexts. Ganusah's scholarly inquiries into the intersectionality of religion, morality and women's concerns significantly influenced the Circle's theological orientation, solidifying her legacy as a trailblazing African feminist theologian. Ganusah played an active and influential role within the Circle, participating in conferences and making substantial contributions to the organisation's publications. Her involvement extended beyond mere participation; she exerted significant influence in shaping the theological framework of the Circle, which was deeply rooted in an African feminist paradigm. This paradigm critically examines patriarchal structures within religious contexts and advocates for the amplification of women's voices and the promotion of their leadership capacities within ecclesiastical and societal domains (Mokwena 2000).

A notable aspect of Ganusah's contribution to the Circle was her emphasis on the significance of traditional African beliefs and practices in shaping women's religious experiences. She contended that many African women, despite their membership in Christian churches, were profoundly influenced by traditional

beliefs and practices. As a result, she argued for the importance of African feminist theologians engaging with these traditions rather than outright rejection (Ganusah 2005, 29). Furthermore, Ganusah's scholarly inquiries into the intersectionality of religion, morality and women's concerns within African societies significantly influenced the Circle's theological orientation. Her research acted as a catalyst for challenging conventional perceptions regarding women in African religious contexts and advocating for increased gender parity within religious communities. Presently, the Circle is internationally recognised as a leading network of African female theologians. Ganusah's pivotal role in its establishment underscores her profound impact on shaping the discourse on women's issues within African Christianity. Her continued dedication to the Circle's initiatives serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment for women across the continent, solidifying her legacy as a pioneering African feminist theologian.

Major Theological Ideas and Publications

Ganusah's theological perspective is succinctly encapsulated in one of her notable citations:

African traditional religions have the potential to promote gender equality and women's empowerment but they must be critically examined and reinterpreted in light of feminist values and perspectives (Ganusah 2017b, 63).

This underscores her approach of critically reassessing traditional African beliefs and practices through a feminist lens, emphasising their capacity to foster gender equality and women's empowerment. Ganusah's seminal work, published in 2013, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana*, is a scholarly endeavour that delves into the traditional rites of the Ewe people of Ghana and their implications for the socialisation and empowerment of young women. Through meticulous analysis, Ganusah provides a critical examination of the role of religion in shaping gender identity and promoting gender equality in African societies. In addition to her books, Ganusah has authored numerous articles in academic journals and edited volumes. Among these are, *Gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa* (2010). This work explores the correlation between gender inequalities and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Another noteworthy article, *The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion* (2010), scrutinises the marginalisation of women in African religions and endeavours to promote greater gender equality within these contexts. Ganusah's research extends to the intersections of religion, ethics and politics in African societies. In her article *Ethics and Political Culture in Africa* (2004), she contends that traditional African ethical frameworks possess the potential to foster enhanced political accountability and transparency. Furthermore, she explores the role of religion in promoting peace and social justice in post-conflict societies. Ganusah's scholarly pursuits primarily focus on religion and morality in African societies, particularly with regard to women's issues. Her extensive publication record

reflects her dedication to these topics, with notable works including *Religious Education and the Empowerment of Women in Ghana* (2001), *African Women Theologians and the Struggle for Gender Justice* (2007), *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood* (2008) and *Women, Religion and Social Change in Ghana* (2012). Her contributions shed light on the pivotal role of women in effecting social change and the potential of religion as a mobilising force for women's empowerment in Ghanaian society.

Conclusion

Ganusah's indelible mark as an African womanist theologian and educator resonates profoundly, particularly through her foundational role in the Circle. The Circle, founded to counter the patriarchal nature of African theology, owes much of its ethos to Ganusah's visionary leadership. Her scholarly contributions have challenged patriarchal norms and paved the way for a more inclusive theological discourse in Africa. Ganusah's unwavering commitment to education and advocacy continues to inspire generations of scholars and activists, cementing her legacy as a trailblazer in the pursuit of gender equality and social justice.

Bibliography

- Ganusah, R. "Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood." In *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader*, edited by R. Terborg-Penn, A. B. Rushing, and S. Harley, 231–240. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1996.
- . "Ethics and Political Culture in Africa." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by K. Wiredu, 439–448. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004.
- . "African Women's Theology: A Critical Analysis." *Black Theology* 3, no. 1 (2005): 21–35.
- . "Religious Education and the Empowerment of Women in Ghana." In *Women, Religion and Education in Africa*, edited by I. A. Phiri and S. Nadar, 57–67. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2006.
- . *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood*. Legon Theological Studies: Accra Ghana, 2008.
- . "Challenging Patriarchy: A Feminist Theological Reflection on Christian Women in Africa." *Journal of Constructive Theology* 16, no. 2 (2010): 75–90.
- . "Gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa." In *Handbook of HIV and Social Work: Principles, Practice and Populations*, edited by C. C. Poindexter and S. L. Brown, 219–238. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.
- . "Women, Religion and Social Change in Ghana." In *Religion, Culture and Society in Ghana: New Perspectives*, edited by P. Gifford, 137–155. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2012.
- . "Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood." In *The Church and Culture in Africa: Essays in Honor of Victor I. Ezigbo*, edited by J. N. K. Mugambi, L. Magesa, and L. Njoroge, 159–172. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.

- . “African Women’s Theology: A Critical Analysis.” *Black Theology* 3, no. 1 (2017a): 21–35.
- . “Feminist Theological Reflections on African Traditional Religion and Women’s Empowerment.” In *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by R. M. Gerike and M. S. H. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 61–72. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017b.
- Gyasi, K.O. and Amissah, A. “The Contribution of Dr. Rebecca Naa Okaikor Ganusah to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (1989–2014)” In *The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians: Vision, Voice and Praxis*, edited by M. Andriano and E. H. K. Ammah, 89–107. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020.
- Mokwena, R. “The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians: The Early Days.” *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 2 (2000): 128–134.
- Oduyoye, M. A. “The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians: A Brief History.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5, no. 2 (1989): 89–96.
- Rwezaura, B.A., Gerloff, R. and Muthevhuli, K.B. (eds.) *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Chapter 56

ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN METHODIST CHURCH: THE JOURNEY OF REVEREND RHODA ADA-JAMES

Opeyemi Wemimo Adedoyin

Introduction

Gender inequalities happen in all spaces and institutions. Religious institutions are not exempt. Sacred texts such as the Bible, Qur'an, etc. are used to enforce gender discrimination. For many, this would not be an issue worth fighting but Mercy Oduyoye noted the importance of African women's need for freedom and presence in spaces of decision-making and began mobilising African women in religious institutions to come together and reflect on how African women would access and participate in such decision-making spaces. The need to liberate women from the shackles of patriarchal systems led to the establishment of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, officially launched in 1989 in Ghana. The Circle focuses on women academics in the fields of religion and culture with the primary objective being to investigate and bring liberation to African women as well as to record and publish research around African women's theologies. Moreover, the Circle is actively involved with women at the community level.

Since its inception, the Circle has had immense influence on academic reflections in the discipline of theology with reference to the dignity and role of women in the church and in society (Fiedler and Hofmeyr, 40). The majority of the women who participated in the establishment of the Circle and participated in its inaugural conference were affiliated with the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), among them was Reverend Rhoda Ada-James. This chapter focuses on the pioneering matriarch of the Circle, Rev. Rhoda Ada-James. Ada-James was born on 16 March 1955 to the family of Elder James Ogbeole (JP) and Martha James in Adum Ainona, Orkam in Ogbeabibo, Benue State, Nigeria. She was among the pioneering women who received training at the Laymen Theological Institute, now called Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu. Ada-James was the Conference Women's Work coordinator of the Methodist Church, a position which afforded her the opportunity of attending the inaugural Circle conference.

Her sermons and sayings centres around ‘faith.’ Ada-James’s life experiences have profoundly reinforced her steadfast belief in the omnipotence of God. This conviction serves as a driving force behind her accomplishments and influences her encouragement of women within her church and broader community. Through her example, she advocates that with unwavering faith in God and diligent effort, women can achieve parity with and at times even surpass, the accomplishments of men. This chapter is a biographical exposé on the life of Very Reverend Rhoda Ada-James and her journey in the ministry. It will describe some biographic information about Rev Rhoda Ada-James giving a brief background, education work and her major theological ideas.

Educational Training and Work

Ada-James, hailing from a lineage of Methodists spanning three generations, commenced her educational journey at the Methodist Primary School Ainona from 1962–1968. Following the passing of her husband in 1974, she embarked on her ministerial path in 1977. It was during this period that she was inducted into the Deaconess Order under the guidance of Deacon J.O. Job, now known as the Most Reverend J.O. Job, the Archbishop of Abuja Methodist Church, Nigeria. Concurrently, she held the position of Youth President in the former Odoba circuit in Enone, Benue. Ada-James had the privilege of participating in Sister Helen Davie’s advocacy efforts aimed at facilitating the training of women for the Deaconess Order, alongside three other women. As a member of the inaugural cohort of women to undergo training at the Methodist Laymen Institute, Sagamu, she successfully completed her studies in 1979. Subsequently, she was stationed in Oturkpo within the old Benue diocese where she assumed responsibilities for coordinating women’s affairs (Ada-James 2022). In 1981, Ada-James embarked on a journey to the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Zambia, now known as the United Church of Zambia University where she undertook a six-month certificate course in Pan-African Women Leadership (Methodist News 1989, 9). Subsequently, in 1983, she pursued a certificate course in Pan-African Women’s Work in The Gambia before returning to her diocese to apply her newfound knowledge. In 1986, she seized the opportunity to further her education by enrolling in a diploma course in social development at St. Patrick University in Canada. Continuing her academic pursuits, in 1988 she returned to the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Zambia and successfully completed an Advanced Diploma in Pan-African Women Leadership, graduating with distinction.

Upon her return to Nigeria, she assumed the role of Coordinator of Women’s Work in the Benue Diocese and was later appointed as the Conference Women’s Work Coordinator from 1989–1996. Furthermore, from 2006–2009, she pursued a Diploma in Religious Studies and Theology at the Methodist Theological Institute in Umuahia, Nigeria. Following her training at the Laymen Institute, Ada-James paved the way for numerous women to undergo similar training and subsequently

assume pastoral roles, including church planting. This initial step laid the foundation for women to ascend to positions within the clergy (Ada-James 2022). Ada-James held the position of Coordinator of Women's Work at the Headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria, marking the third individual to do so since the department's inception. She was also the second Nigerian black woman to occupy this role. In 2011, she was reassigned to Makurdi where she oversaw the church in the Northern circuit. Subsequently, between 2012 and 2015, Ada-James served as the minister in charge of Faith Methodist Church in the Diocese of Makurdi.

By 2015, she assumed the role of the second minister in the Cathedral of the Methodist Church in Makurdi. Presently, she serves as the minister in charge of Divine Methodist Church, Makurdi, having attained the rank of Presbyterian, the highest position women have reached in the Methodist Church, Nigeria. Ada-James emphasised that women in the Methodist Church, in Nigeria, are not discriminated against, as they undertake similar responsibilities to their male counterparts. However, she noted that women in the deaconess order often face discrimination, being relegated to tasks perceived as traditionally feminine. Despite undergoing training alongside male counterparts, deaconesses frequently find themselves limited to interactions with women and children while male colleagues advance to become ministers. Although most of Ada-James's male colleagues have become bishops, her ordination was delayed due to the Methodist Church of Nigeria's historical reluctance to ordain women. Despite these challenges, Ada-James has observed a gradual reduction in discrimination and believes that women are becoming increasingly qualified compared to men. As evidence of progress, the Methodist Church of Nigeria ordained its first female bishop in January 2023 (Ada-James 2022).

Participation in the Circle Formation

Ada-James participated in the inaugural conference of the Circle due to her role as the Conference Women's Work Coordinator in the Methodist Church, which granted her the esteemed invitation. At the conference, she presented a paper titled *The Scope of Women's Participation in the Church*, advocating for the full inclusion of women in liturgical activities such as administering sacraments, preaching and teaching, emphasising their participation beyond traditional roles confined to women and children. Subsequent to her attendance at the inaugural conference, Ada-James has not engaged further with the Circle and has refrained from publishing papers, focusing instead on delivering sermons relevant to her ministerial calling. Ada-James exemplifies a success story within the Methodist Church having navigated through various stages, from historical restrictions on the inclusion of women in ministry to contemporary times where such barriers have been dismantled, allowing individuals of all ages and genders to enter ministry upon certification by their Archdiocese. As she approaches the official retirement age in the Methodist Church, Ada-James expresses gratitude to God for His

benevolence throughout her journey (Ada-James 2022). Ada-James represents one of the success models within the Methodist Church, having gone through all the stages, from the previous restrictions placed on the selection of women into the ministry to recent times where those restrictions have been removed to allow all ages and genders into the ministry if they have been certified by their Archdiocese.

Ada-James's contribution at the inaugural meeting for the Circle in 1989 was published as a conference proceeding. Her paper affirms her stance on women's involvement in ministry citing Mary Magdalene as the first evangelist in the Bible, highlighting women's equal responsibility in church decision-making and vocal participation. Ada-James's unwavering faith in God serves as a driving force in her life and ministry, particularly in the face of personal loss and challenges. She attributes her achievements and resilience to her profound faith, emphasising that with faith, women can excel in ministry. Her theological perspectives on women and God are deeply influenced by her life experiences, underscoring the importance of faith in women's spiritual journeys and their capacity to achieve remarkable feats. As an ordained minister, Ada-James has authored sermons and educational materials as part of her work within the Methodist Church Nigeria further propagating her theological beliefs and encouraging women's active participation in ministry (Ada-James 2022).

Lessons from the Life of Ada-James

Ada-James stands as a testament to the pioneering efforts of Helen Davie who fervently advocated for the training of deaconesses within the Methodist Church of Nigeria and to her steadfast desire to impact the lives of women, hence her participation in the inaugural gathering of the Circle. Joining the Deaconess Order in 1979, Ada-James embarked on a journey that culminated in her full ordination into ministry in 2006. The strides made within the Deaconess Order reflect the gradual progress towards gender inclusivity within the Methodist Church of Nigeria with more women being ushered into ministry roles. Helen Davie's relentless advocacy for women's training within the Institute bore fruit as evidenced by the achievements and life legacy of Ada-James. Ada-James actively promotes the inclusion of women in ministry, drawing from her personal experiences as primary material for her presentations and sermons. This aligns with one of the fundamental tenets of the Circle which emphasises the importance of amplifying the voices of women, particularly women theologians, to share their encounters and challenges within both society and religious institutions. Ada-James epitomises this ethos, serving as a beacon for women's empowerment and advocacy within the church and beyond (Ada-James 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey of Reverend Rhoda Ada-James within the Methodist Church of Nigeria exemplifies the remarkable strides made towards gender

inclusivity and empowerment within religious institutions. From her early involvement in the Deaconess Order to her subsequent ordination into full ministry, Ada-James has been a trailblazer, navigating through historical barriers to women's participation in ministry. Her participation in the inaugural conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians underscores her commitment to amplifying the voices of women within religious spaces. Ada-James's unwavering faith in God and her advocacy for women's inclusion in ministry serve as inspirational pillars for women within the Methodist Church and beyond. As the Methodist Church of Nigeria continues to progress towards gender equality, Ada-James stands as a testament to the transformative power of faith and resilience in overcoming institutional barriers. Through her exemplary life and ministry, Ada-James offers valuable lessons and inspiration for the ongoing journey towards gender equality within religious institutions.

Bibliography

Ada-James, Rhoda. Interview by author, 2022.

———. "The Scope of Women's Participation in the Church." In *Talita Qumi: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 198. Accra: Sam Wood, 2001.

Fiedler, R.N. and Hofmeyr, J.W. "The Conception of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians: Is It African or Western?" *Acta Theologica* 31, no. 1 (2011): 39–57.

"Methodists Celebrate 250th Anniversary of John Wesley's Conversion." *Methodist News* 1, no. 1 (April 1989): 9.

Chapter 57

A BIOGRAPHICAL STORY OF REV. DINAH ABBEY-MENSAH

Joyce Boham

Introduction

This chapter delves into the life and perspectives of Rev. Dinah Abbey-Mensah (formerly Dinah Dzikunu), a pivotal figure among the founding members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The narrative presented herein emerges from an interview conducted with Abbey-Mensah on 8 Jan 2022 within the confines of her residence. Through this chapter, Abbey-Mensah's influence within the Circle, her community endeavours and her ministerial contributions are explored and analysed. Furthermore, the chapter elucidates Abbey-Mensah's contextual understanding, delineating the circumstances that precipitated the establishment of the Circle, alongside the attendant challenges and the instructive insights gleaned for present and future generations.

The backdrop of the 1980s witnessed a conspicuous absence of African women's theological discourse, particularly concerning issues intersecting religion and culture. The biennial Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture (referred to herein as 'the Institute') during this epoch underscored the imperative of fostering indigenous African women's theological perspectives, recognising the dearth of such narratives amidst scholarly discourse. Notably, the Institute identified the exigency of grappling with the intersectionality of religion and culture vis-à-vis African women's development. Against this backdrop, luminaries such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Elizabeth Amoah, Rabbiatu Ammah, Musimbi Kanyoro, Bernnadet Mbuy Baya and others gathered to champion the cause of African women's theological agency. Their collective aspiration culminated in the inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989 at Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana, uniting a cohort of over 60 women. Tasked with the mission of empowering African women to narrate their own experiences within the context of a deeply entrenched patriarchal religious and cultural milieu, the pioneering efforts of these initial 70 matriarchs served as the bedrock upon which the Circle was established and sustained.

Brief Background and Educational History

Abbey-Mensah was born on 15 August 1944 to the late Mr Winfried Kwame Dzikunu, a military officer and the late Madam Ruth Akosua Gowu, a midwife, at Ho in the Volta Region of Ghana. Ho, the capital town of the Volta Region, is Abbey-Mensah's maternal hometown. Her mother being a career woman was mostly out of town. So together with her cousins, Dinah was brought up by her grandfather who was a farmer and her grandmother who was a trader. During her formative years, Abbey-Mensah commenced her educational journey at the EP Mission School in Ho, subsequently transitioning to the Ho Middle School for a brief period. Following this, she enrolled at the Aburi Girls Middle Boarding School for an additional year. In 1959, Abbey-Mensah successfully sat for the common entrance examination administered by the West African Examination Council, securing admission to Aburi Girls Secondary School where she commenced her studies in September of the same year. Notably, this period coincided with a significant shift in the educational calendar of Ghana, transitioning from a January to December-schedule to a September to May framework. Upon completing her secondary education, Abbey-Mensah embarked on a career in teaching, initially serving as a pupil teacher for a duration of two years. Subsequently, she pursued professional training at the Winneba Teacher Training College, undergoing a comprehensive two-year programme to attain certification as an educator. Following the successful completion of her training, Abbey-Mensah was appointed to the faculty of Hohoe EP Secondary School where she taught for a consecutive two-year period spanning from 1966–1968. In 1969, Abbey-Mensah transitioned to the Ho Technical Institute, presently known as the Ho Technical University where she assumed a teaching role. Subsequently, she joined the staff of Kabore School, a subsidiary institution under the auspices of the Armed Forces where she continued to contribute her expertise and knowledge. Abbey-Mensah is married to Mr. Benjamin Abbey-Mensah and they have three children, Darleen, Pearl and Patricia and three grandchildren, Seli, Mervyn and Lilybeth (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Ministerial training

Abbey-Mensah recalls receiving her call into the ordained ministry during the ordination service of the first two female pastors of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, in Ghana. Until 1980, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church had not ordained women as pastors. So, it was a great experience to witness the commissioning of the first two female pastors of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. One was the wife of the then Moderator Rev. Dovlo and the other was Madam Anyagli-Mensah. Since they were advanced in age, they were trained at the church's Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary for three months after which they were ordained. The sermon during the commissioning service was by a German female minister on the theme, "Who shall I send?" Dinah felt strongly that the question was for her, so she responded, "Here I am, send me, Lord" (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Abbey-Mensah's aspiration to enter the ministry was met with enthusiasm by her grandfather, who, as a presbyter, supported her pursuit in 1980. Subsequently, in September 1981, she underwent the Trinity College, Legon, Entrance Examinations and successfully passed. However, her initial elation was dampened when she received a subsequent letter instructing her to defer her enrolment due to accommodation constraints. In 1982, Abbey-Mensah was granted the opportunity to commence her ministerial training at Trinity College, Legon. She entered a seminary consisting of approximately one-hundred students, where she stood as the sole female participant. Despite being in the minority, Abbey-Mensah found solace in the camaraderie and support of her classmates, including Rt Rev. Samuel K. Osabutey, a Methodist minister. Initially, she resided in the drivers' quarters under the purview of Principal Rev. Dr Samuel Prempeh until the following year when another female student joined her. Subsequently, the female students were relocated to the primary outhouse where Abbey-Mensah remained until the completion of her theological studies in 1985 (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Ministerial journey

Abbey-Mensah was commissioned into ordained ministry of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana in 1985 after completing her theological studies at Trinity College, Legon (now Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon Ghana). She is the first female graduate of Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Trinity College. After her commissioning, she was posted as chaplain and tutor at Mawuko Girls Secondary School in 1985 and was later promoted to the position of Assistant Head Mistress of the school. In September 1987, she was awarded a scholarship and proceeded to study for a Master of Arts in Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, USA (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

After completing the MACE programme, Abbey-Mensah returned home on 30 March 1989. She served the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana between 1993 and 2000 as the first Christian Education Programme Officer. Her outstanding performance gained her another appointment as the Principal of the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary at Peki. She was elected as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Pastors Association President, a position she held for six years. She represented her church at many conferences such as the International Ecumenical Sessions like the All-African Conference of Churches, World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches and all other international ecumenical partner Missions (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Participation in the Circle Formation

While working in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) office as part-time staff, Abbey-Mensah had the opportunity to meet with Mercy Amba Oduyoye. At the time, Oduyoye, affectionately known as 'Auntie Mercy' was gathering African women who had studied religion or theology in

anticipation of creating the Circle. Abbey-Mensah received an invitation to join the team together with other Nigerian women theologians. On 25 September 1989 when the Circle was inaugurated, Abbey-Mensah was not present. She missed the event because she was representing the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana at a conference in Nairobi but her paper on '*Single Women Parent: What the Church can do*' was presented on her behalf by Rev. Mabel Morny, also a Minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

During her working life at the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) office, Abbey-Mensah worked together with Rev. June Rogers, a great supporter of the Circle, to raise funds for the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture project in Ghana, situated at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon Ghana campus. Abbey-Mensah has since then been a very active member of the Ghana Circle and supporting the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture. She was one of the main leaders during the Way Forward Seminar in Adidome on a campaign against Trokosi (a traditional system where virgin girls are sent to the shrine of the gods as slaves to atone for the sins of relatives). Through the instrumentality of Abbey-Mensah, the Ghana Circle together with the Institute was able to free some of the young girls from the shrine. With support from the Ark Foundation, the girls were given vocational training to learn a trade for their livelihood. Abbey-Mensah also started the Ho Women Intercessors Ministry which has since been working with the Institute (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Outstanding Achievements

Abbey-Mensah has undertaken significant scholarly endeavours that hold personal significance for her. One notable area of her work involves advocacy against certain interpretations of the creation narrative presented in Genesis Chapter 1. Specifically, she critiques the interpretation wherein a woman's creation from a man's rib, often invoked during wedding ceremonies, serves as a rationale for the subordination of women. This prevalent viewpoint reduces a woman to merely an anatomical component of man, thereby distorting her inherent identity and dignity as an individual crafted in the likeness of God. This perspective is commonly referred to as the 'Spare Rib syndrome,' a term coined by Oduyoye (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1989). Abbey-Mensah advocates for an alternative reading of the creation account found in Genesis 2:4, which portrays God's simultaneous creation of man and woman. She argues that this narrative presents a more equitable depiction of the relationship between man and woman, rather than one that elevates man above woman (Interview with Abbey-Mensah 2022). Also dear to Abbey-Mensah's heart is the need to focus on Ephesians 5:21 at weddings instead of focusing only on verses 22–33 which emphasises the submission of women to their husbands.

For Abbey-Mensah, if preachers do not explain the meaning of submission to each other, the text should be avoided altogether. The use of the word 'submission' has according to Abbey-Mensah, over centuries been used to sideline and

marginalise women. She explains that God created the male and female to support each other. She also laments the attitude of the church where leadership such as the *President*, *Vice President* and other offices are normally reserved for men before women are considered, indicating that women are only an afterthought. Abbey-Mensah believes the church must deal with such biases. To her, leadership must be based on one's ability and not biological make-up. Abbey-Mensah posits that these attitudes warrant scrutiny both within the ecclesiastical sphere and within broader national contexts. However, she holds a particularly high expectation for the church, viewing it as the embodiment of light and salt within society, entrusted with the solemn duty of interpreting the divine Word of God. Abbey-Mensah has presented many unpublished conference papers including one at the 7th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Challenges and Lessons—The Way Forward

For Abbey-Mensah, it is important for all to have the determination to succeed. She maintains that it is this determination to succeed that enabled her to cope in the presence of many male students at the seminary during her studies. Sharing bathrooms with the drivers was not an easy experience but determination saw her through. She goes on to say that she is not happy that young women easily give up in contemporary times. They lack the determination to stand up for their rights as human beings and fight for what is due to them. For Abbey-Mensah, women who are afraid of being victimised for speaking the truth are not pleasing God but humanity. No matter how strong our resolve can be as women, there will be times when women may get frustrated and want to give up.

It could happen in all life endeavours or even a relationship. Preparing oneself for such times will make women succeed. Such inner strength is needed most as well as encouragement from other women, said Abbey-Mensah (Abbey-Mensah 2022). Abbey-Mensah greatly admires the boldness and confidence with which Oduyoye speaks on issues and points out the need to re-examine religion and culture for its disempowering effects on women. Such boldness has served as a pillar of reference throughout her ministry and continues to be an encouragement for her. Abbey-Mensah believes that leaders are to learn from Oduyoye's empowerment style of mentoring. Through the Circle, she has learnt how to use her power as a woman to achieve whatever she desires and not allow anything to deter her from achieving her goals (Abbey-Mensah 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the narrative of Rev. Dinah Abbey-Mensah encapsulates a profound journey marked by resilience, determination and unwavering commitment to the advancement of African women within the theological discourse and societal spheres. Through her elucidated experiences and perspectives, Abbey-Mensah emerges as a pioneer, navigating through patriarchal barriers and cultural constraints

to carve out a space where African women's voices resonate with resounding clarity. The inception of the Circle stands as a testament to Abbey-Mensah's enduring legacy, alongside the visionary efforts of other luminaries who spearheaded this transformative movement. As a founding member, her contributions to the Circle and her steadfast advocacy for the inclusion of African women within theological discourse have left an indelible mark on the landscape of religious scholarship.

Abbey-Mensah's educational trajectory, ministerial journey and scholarly endeavours underscore her unwavering commitment to challenging entrenched narratives that undermine the dignity and agency of African women. Her critique of prevailing interpretations of biblical texts, coupled with her advocacy for a more equitable portrayal of gender dynamics within religious contexts, reflects her steadfast dedication to fostering inclusive and empowering spaces for African women. Abbey-Mensah's reflections on challenges encountered and lessons learned underscore the imperative of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Her unwavering resolve to confront societal norms and champion the rights of women serves as an inspiration for present and future generations, underscoring the transformative potential inherent within each individual to effect meaningful change.

Bibliography

Abbey-Mensah, Dinah. Interview by Joyce Boham, January 8, 2022.

Oduyoye, M.A. and Kanyoro, M.R.A. (eds.) *Talitha Qumi: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians*. Accra: Sam Wood, 1989.

Chapter 58

THE STORY AND LIFE OF JOSEPHINE OLUBUNMI OLAGUNJU, SHCJ

Yetunde Ruth Balogun

Introduction

The discourses surrounding women's participation in religion and leadership roles within religious institutions in Nigeria often gravitate towards the issue of their exclusion from ordained ministry. However, it is imperative to recognise the significant contributions of religious women engaged in non-ordained ministry to the religious landscape and community development. This biographical study delves into the life and work of Rev. Sr Josephine Olubunmi Olagunju, a Catholic nun belonging to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. Her narrative sheds light on the extensive efforts undertaken by women in non-ordained ministry to advance the gospel of Christ and foster human development. Utilising a survey research methodology, this project focuses on various religious communities within the Catholic Church in southwestern Nigeria to explore the activities and current whereabouts of Sr Josephine Olagunju.

Data collection methods include interviews conducted via telephone, email and WhatsApp conversations with Olagunju. Through these interactions, it is revealed that Olagunju's life has been dedicated to serving God and humanity through a consecrated life spanning nearly five decades. Olagunju's contributions to spiritual growth and human development encompass pastoral work, counseling, education, renewal programmes, secretarial duties, training and administration. Additionally, Olagunju has actively participated in numerous national and international conferences and workshops. As a respected female theologian, she stands as one of the founding figures within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians symbolising the pioneering spirit and enduring commitment of women in advancing theological discourse and community development and engagement.

Brief Background of Upbringing and Values

Born about 60 years ago at Mushin Mushin, Lagos State Nigeria, Rev. Sr Josephine Olagunju is the first of seven children from the devout Catholic family of Prince

Michael Olagunju and Princess Maria Olagunju (Nee Oladejo) who hail from Offa, Kwara State and Ire, Osun State respectively. Her formative years were spent in the circle of five junior brothers and one junior sister. She recalls with nostalgia how she habitually watched grapefruit trees laden with fruit as a girl. Daily life majorly revolved around regular church attendance and religious devotions. Olagunju cultivated the desire to go into the religious order in her formative years (Olagunju 2022). One of Olagunju's favorite sayings is that "Ambience of peace, love and religious toleration is the foundation for national development." (Olagunju 2022)

Olagunju frequently emphasises the importance of fostering an ambience characterised by peace, love and religious toleration, viewing it as an essential foundation for national development.

This assertion encapsulates a profound understanding of the interconnectedness between societal harmony and progress. At its core, the saying underscores the notion that a peaceful and tolerant social environment provides a conducive setting for societal cohesion and advancement. Peace, as a fundamental element, serves as a catalyst for stability, facilitating economic growth, social welfare and political stability. Love, on the other hand, fosters empathy, compassion and unity among individuals and communities thereby promoting social cohesion and collective well-being. Moreover, the emphasis on religious toleration acknowledges the diversity inherent in societies, particularly in contexts marked by pluralistic religious landscapes. By advocating for tolerance and respect for diverse religious beliefs and practices, Olagunju recognises the significance of embracing diversity as a source of strength rather than division. In doing so, she promotes social inclusivity and fosters a sense of belonging among individuals regardless of their religious affiliations (Olagunju 2022).

Educational Training and Work History

Olagunju began her early education at St. Michael's Primary School, Mushin. She was at the Pope Pius XII Secondary School, Mushin, Lagos State for her post-primary education. She attended Yaba College of Technology, Yaba where she obtained an Ordinary Diploma in Secretarial Studies. Thereafter, Olagunju obtained a Certificate in Communication from the Catholic Media Centre, Hatch-end, London. The quest for higher learning led her to the Gregorian University, Rome where she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and a Master's degree in Religious Science. The precarious security situation in Nigeria motivated her to pursue a PhD in Peace and Development from the prestigious University of Ilorin, specialising in Peace and Governance (Olagunju 2022).

Olagunju belongs to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ), a women's religious congregation of the Roman Catholic Church. As a member of SHCJ, a religious society, her work is essentially related to devotion to apostolate, pastoral and spiritual ministries. She has immensely contributed to the spiritual growth of Christians and human development through pastoral works, counselling, education,

renewal programmes, secretarial works, training and administration. Olagunju has never worked in secular organisations, government or public establishments. Her work experience spans 50 years, covering countries in Africa and Europe. Olagunju served as project secretary at Kenting Africa Resource Services between 1973 and 1975. She was once the Secretary (1982–1984) and later Vice-President (1984–1985) of the Association of Priests and Religious in Rome, Italy. She was also Deputy Director (1986–1987) and later Director (1987–1992) at Centre for Renewal, Jos Nigeria (Olagunju 2022).

Olagunju's extensive background in media and communication became evident during her tenure as Director of Administration at Radio-TV Presence, N'Djamena, Chad (1993–1994). Subsequently, she assumed the role of founder and director of media education with a particular emphasis on inter-religious dialogue, in N'Djamena, Chad, serving in this capacity from 1995 to 1998. Additionally, Olagunju held positions on various executive boards, councils and committees within Catholic women's religious congregations in Nigeria and abroad. Noteworthy among her leadership roles was her membership in the leadership team of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in Rome, Italy (1998–2004). She also served as an executive council member of the Justice Peace Integrity of Creation unit of the International Union of Superiors General, a global representation of Religious Orders, based in Rome, Italy, from 1999 to 2003. Furthermore, she served on the executive council of the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network in Rome, Italy, from 2000 to 2003.

Olagunju held the position of secretary to the six-member Meeting for African Collaboration (MAC), serving as a liaison between the Unions of Superiors General (male and female) of congregations with missions in Africa and the Vatican in Rome. She was also a member of the Executive Committee of SEDOS (Service de Documentation) of the Superiors General, focusing on worldwide mission work from 2000 to 2004. In subsequent years, Olagunju continued her contributions to various organisations and institutions. She served as a team member at the Centre for Renewal in Jos, Nigeria, from 2005 to 2009. Additionally, she held the position of Executive Director at Lumen Christi Television on the Lekki-Epe Express Road, Lagos, from 2014–2017. Following this, she assumed the role of academic secretary at the Thomas More Institute of Technology from 2018 to 2019 and subsequently at the College of Health Sciences and Technology from 2020 to 2021. Currently, she serves as the Deputy Director at the Centre for Renewal in Jos, Nigeria (Olagunju 2022).

Participation in the Formation of the Circle

Olagunju participated in the inaugural meeting of the Circle, held at Legon, Accra, Ghana in 1989, representing the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT). Notably, Professor Mercy Oduyoye who served as the President of EATWOT at the time, was also instrumental in the establishment of the

Circle thereby establishing an intrinsic connection between the two associations. Throughout her involvement, Olagunju has been actively engaged within the EATWOT platform, demonstrating more consistent participation compared to her involvement in activities of the Circle. She has attended numerous EATWOT conferences where she encountered many fellow members of the Circle. These conferences were convened in various locations, including Harare, Zimbabwe, Nairobi, Kenya; and Quito, Ecuador (Olagunju 2022).

Major Theological Ideas

Olagunju, although not primarily focused on academic pursuits, engages in various educational endeavours aligned with the objectives of the SHCJ, to which she belongs, particularly in the realm of renewal ministry. Her commitment extends to facilitating workshops and conferences on religious and social themes aimed at fostering societal development and human progress. Despite the intention to publish the proceedings of colloquiums facilitated by the SHCJ in books or journals, financial constraints have hindered the realisation of this objective for many of these events. Driven by concerns over the escalating religious and socio-political divisions within Nigeria and a steadfast commitment to promoting peace and harmony among adherents of different faiths, Olagunju pursued and obtained a PhD in Peace and Development Studies. Her doctoral research focused on the perceptions and involvement of youths in violent conflicts in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, spanning the years 1994 to 2014. Additionally, Olagunju has authored two published works: *African Spirituality: A Cry for Life* and “Towards Religious Tolerance in a Multi-religious Nigeria Using Gandhian Principles of Satyagraha Model.” Furthermore, Olagunju has facilitated numerous workshops addressing themes such as Faith, Religion and Spirituality, Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace Building and Faith Seeking Understanding. Through these initiatives, she contributes to fostering dialogue, understanding and peaceful coexistence among diverse religious and social groups, thus advancing the cause of harmony and societal progress (Olagunju 2022).

Bibliography

Olagunju, J.O. Interview by author, July 2022.

- . “Perception and Involvement of Youths in Violent Conflicts in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria 1994-2014.” PhD diss., University of Ilorin, 2017.
- , ed. *African Spirituality: A Cry for Life. Proceedings of the West-African Conference of the West/Central African Region of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT)*. Jos: Fab Anieh Printing Press, 1991.
- . “Towards Religious Tolerance in a Multi-religious Nigeria Using Gandhian Principle of Satyagraha Model.” In *First National Confab Book of Proceedings*, edited by Department of Religious Studies, 204–221. Maleté-Ilorin, Nigeria: Kwara State University, 2010.

Chapter 59

SOPHIA AKUA ADUTWUMWAA DUKE: CELEBRATING A PIONEERING WOMAN

Margaret Reid Bartel

Introduction

This article delves into the life and legacy of Sophia Akua Adutwumwaa Duker, a remarkable figure in the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG) and the broader community. Known for her insightful statements and deep understanding of life's challenges, Duker's journey is a testament to wisdom, perseverance and service. Sophia Akua Adutwumwaa Duker was born on 16 April 1924 into the prestigious Bretuo family of Effiduase, Ghana. Raised in a Methodist household by her father, Reverend Moses Kwasi Deborah, she inherited a strong foundation of faith and education. Sophia's early education at Mmofraturu Girls' Boarding School and Achimota Teacher Training College set the stage for her future endeavours (Adetola *et al.* 2020a).

Education and Career

After excelling in her studies, Duker continued her education abroad, attending the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Institute of Education at University of London. In 1952, she married Kojo Arhin Duker, an electrical engineer and later embarked on a distinguished teaching career in Ghana, including at the Ghana International School (Adetola *et al.* 2020a).

Service and Vision

Duker's contributions to the Methodist Church of Ghana were exemplary, particularly in her ministry to young people and women. She initiated projects such as the Calvary Methodist Vocational Institute and the 'Hope for Teenage Mothers' programme, embodying wisdom and faith in action. Duker's exemplary contributions to the Methodist Church of Ghana underscore her dedication to serving marginalised groups, particularly young people and women. Through initiatives such as the Calvary Methodist Vocational Institute and the 'Hope for

Teenage Mothers' programme, she worked tirelessly with marginalised women. Duker embodied the fusion of wisdom and faith in action, addressing societal challenges with a holistic approach that combined practical assistance with spiritual guidance. Her visionary leadership and deep-rooted faith guided her towards projects that not only met immediate needs but also fostered long-term growth and transformation within the community, inspiring others to participate in efforts towards social justice and empowerment. Duker's ministry highlights the evolving role of women within religious institutions and their capacity to effect positive change, offering insights into the intersection of faith, activism and social change within religious contexts and beyond (Adetola *et al.* 2020a).

Support for Women's Empowerment

Duker's steadfast support for initiatives such as the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture reflects her unwavering commitment to the empowerment of women. Within the context of her relationship with the founder of the Circle, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Duker's involvement takes on added significance. As Oduyoye's former teacher, Duker played a role in shaping Oduyoye's intellectual and personal development, laying the foundation for their subsequent collaboration in advancing women's rights and recognition within theological discourse. Their shared vision for gender equality and empowerment served as a catalyst for their enduring partnership and friendship, as evidenced by their sustained efforts over a prolonged period. This collaboration between Duker and Oduyoye not only underscores the importance of mentorship and intergenerational dialogue in fostering social change but also highlights the transformative potential of collective action in challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for the rights and recognition of African women within religious and academic spheres. Duker like Oduyoye, exemplifies the importance of collaboration, friendship, mentorship, shared values and institutional activism in advancing gender justice and equality (Adetola *et al.* 2020b).

A Legacy of Social Transformation

Duker's life is a testament to the convergence of faith, education and service in the quest for social justice and empowerment. By demonstrating visionary leadership and steadfast dedication, she not only confronted prevailing societal conventions but also advocated for the rights of marginalised communities, imprinting a lasting influence on her immediate surroundings and beyond. Her narrative stands as a guiding light for forthcoming generations, underscoring the potential for impactful change through perseverance and empathy (Adetola *et al.* 2020b).

Conclusion

Sophia Akua Adutwumwaa Duker's journey, from her beginnings in the Bretuo family of Effiduase, Ghana, to her groundbreaking contributions within

the Methodist Church of Ghana, embodies a profound commitment to social transformation. Rooted in faith, education and service, Duker's life serves as a beacon of inspiration for future generations. Her pioneering initiatives, such as the Calvary Methodist Vocational Institute and the 'Hope for Teenage Mothers' programme, reflect her unwavering dedication to empowering marginalised groups, particularly young women. Furthermore, her enduring partnership and friendship with Mercy Amba Oduyoye, founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, highlight the transformative potential of collaboration, mentorship and shared values in advancing gender justice and equality. Duker's legacy is one of resilience, compassion and visionary leadership, reminding us of the profound impact that individuals can have on their communities and the world at large. As we reflect on her remarkable life, we are reminded of the potential for meaningful change through perseverance, empathy and a steadfast commitment to justice.

Bibliography

Adetola, Elizabeth, *et al. Commemorative Booklet—Sophia*. Accra, 2020a.

———. *Sophia Duker Biography*. Accra, 2020b.

Chapter 60

SANKOFA AND AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIES: THE STORY OF LLYODA FANUSIE

Marceline L. Yele

Introduction

This chapter seeks to ascertain the academic and theological contribution of Llyoda Fanusie. The main question of the chapter is: Did Fanusie make any contribution to the theological discussion of her time or not? The objectives that emanate from the problem include finding out the upbringing and educational background of Fanusie, discussing the context of her work (to the Circle) and ascertaining her contribution to inculturation, liberation and African women theology. Methodologically, the chapter utilises a critical analysis approach to examine the aforementioned. A critical analysis allows a researcher to employ tools from various fields to examine different perspectives of the issues discussed. The results show that Fanusie was a product of her culture in which boys and girls receive dichotomised socialisation to function in culturally defined sex roles.

Though girls were socialised to become caring and loving mothers not only to their immediate families but to the entire community, Fanusie also embraced education as a worthy pursuit. This propelled her into academia, where she made commendable contributions to the discourse surrounding inculturation and liberation theology. She stands as one of the pioneering African theologians who diverged from uncritically validating and authenticating male-dominated aspects of African cultures, instead scrutinising the oppressive inclinations of culture, particularly towards women. Her ‘de-culturalisation’ and ‘trans-culturalisation,’ approaches advocate for a better approach to theology in Africa. The chapter concludes that Fanusie’s optimism of the cultural transformation that her methodology would bring actually laid the foundation for depatriarchalisation of texts and methods of interpreting them. It concludes that it is a commendable model for all Rising Stars of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth the Circleⁱ

A biographical essay tells the story of somebody’s life and the contribution the person made to the world. This chapter is a biographical chapter of the life and work of Llyoda Fanusie, one of the pioneer Sierra Leone-based members of

the Circle. As one of the pioneers present at the Accra convention marking the inception of the Circle in 1989, Fanusie distinguished herself by establishing her theological stance within the Circle, thereby significantly enriching the dialogues on inculturation and liberation theologies. Fanusie joined African theologians who in the mid-1950s engaged in inculturation and liberation advocacy to reclaim African cultures that were derogated by missionaries.

Moving further, she adopts a gender approach that she describes as ‘de-culturalisation’ and ‘trans-culturalisation,’ to advocate for a better approach to theology in Africa. This chapter employs some sources to critically analyse this approach which reflects the theological thought pattern of Circle fore-mothers like Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Musimbi Kanyoro and others who did not glorify all African cultural practices but challenged these practices that were life-denying to women and marginalised people. Fanusie argues that God does not derogate culture as the missionaries did, neither does He advocate for cultural practices that dehumanise and demoralise others. In her theological understanding, God expects that those rituals with a negative impact should be changed (Fanusie 1989, 94). She is also aware of the challenge those who advocate for change face. For her, that change must be pursued if it is geared towards the enhancement of life. This chapter is thus organised as follows: Firstly, I present a brief background and upbringing of Fanusie, followed by her educational background, participation in the formation of the Circle, main theological contribution and lastly, I present the conclusion.

Brief Background and Upbringing

Fanusie’s birthplace is not known from the sources I engaged in. Information from her online tribute page states that the Sierra Leone-born Matriarch, Llyoda Fanusie got married to Claude Fanusie. The same author describes her as a Theologian, Educationist and a loving mother who helped many (Online Memorial 2021). There is not much information about Llyoda Fanusie’s background and upbringing. However, the attribute ‘loving mother who helped many’, suggests that she was a typical African woman who grew up responsibly to be useful to her husband and the community. What constitutes masculine and feminine behaviours varies from one culture to another but several cultures share common traits for masculinity and femininity that identify with sex characteristics. These sex characteristics serve as a guide for socialisation to make people conform to their socio-cultural gender (Price and Skolnic 2017, 4).

The background and upbringing of Fanusie suggest a typical patriarchal socialisation where care and love for others are considered female traits inculcated into girls from infancy. The socialisation process orient boys towards leadership, learning of trades and pursuing academic prowess with the view of attending a higher social or political status in society. A boy is often reminded to work hard so that he can make money, marry his wife and be able to take care of his family.

A girl, on the other hand, is trained in nurturing, care-giving and hard work as she assists her mother in doing chores, considered as preparation for marriage and prerequisites for a good suitor. This accounts for the poor economic and social conditions of most women and the prevalence of the poor treatment of women and girls in some societies (Price and Skolnic 2017, 4). Fanusie was nurtured with an upbringing conducive to embracing gender-defined roles which she fulfilled to the utmost of her capacity. However, she transcended the confines of traditional gender roles, extending her endeavours beyond marital and domestic duties.

Educational Training

Limited documentation is available regarding Fanusie's formal education. Despite societal expectations that conditioned her to conform to traditional gender roles as a dutiful wife, she emerged as a theologian. An African female theologian is characterised by her ability to articulate religious beliefs from an African perspective, addressing issues pertaining to women in both religious and cultural contexts. Fanusie, as a participant in the inaugural conference of the Circle, actively aligned herself with the protest movement against the predominant male-centric theological discourse. This discourse uncritically celebrated African culture while disregarding its oppressive implications for women. Fanusie, in consensus with fellow Circle members, advocated for a contextual approach to Liberation Theology in Africa, recognising the imperative to address the needs of both genders. As evidenced by her numerous scholarly publications, Fanusie's theological insights reflect her intellectual rigour and erudition. Her engagement with academia and church life underscores her commitment to critically engaging with cultural practices that perpetuate challenges for women within both religious and societal spheres (Online Memorial 2021).

Participation in the Formation of the Circle

Fanusie's participation in the formation of the Circle in 1989 is evident through her notable contributions, as documented in the primary publication following the Proceedings and Conference of that year (Fanusie 1989, 94). Her engagement during the conference, drawing upon biblical passages to explore the interface between Christianity and culture, underscores her foundational role in the Circle's genesis. Fanusie adeptly illustrates the influence of language in shaping gender identity and societal roles, employing the Akan cultural context to expose prevalent instances of sexism and patriarchal constructs. Subsequent Circle publications maintain a thematic focus on cultural and biblical hermeneutics, the role of women in culture and religion, women's historical narratives and ministries and theological education (Tshehla 2022, 7). This thematic framework resonates with African women theologians' advocacy for a critical cultural and intersectional hermeneutical approach, aimed at dismantling oppressive patriarchal ideologies in culturally mediated texts (Tshehla 2022, 7), diverging from traditional male-centric

approaches to interpretation (Vanhoozer *et al.* 2007, 248). Feminist critical cultural hermeneutics underscores the importance of maintaining a critical distance when analysing the intersection between biblical texts and the cultural milieu of Africans. Esteemed African women theologians such as Mercy A. Oduyoye, Musimbi, N. Kanyoro and Musa W. Dube, as evidenced in their respective works (Oduyoye 1995; Kanyoro 1992; Dube 2017), have illuminated the significance of addressing issues such as male abuse of power, sexism, ideological constructs, stereotyping and the marginalisation of women within African churches, households and societies.

Their scholarship corroborates Obeng's assertion that women are often relegated to the shadows of men (Obeng 1998, 45). From a literary standpoint, these theologians highlight the pervasive influence of male chauvinistic perspectives in discussions concerning women in religion and culture. Oduyoye further critiques the pride African men take in women purportedly not needing liberation as women (Oduyoye 1995, 2). Consequently, African male theologians have historically neglected to address the oppressive roles played by culture, tradition and religion in women's lives, failing to recognise that cultural dynamics often perpetuate traditional foundations that continue to shape women's experiences covertly and overtly (Oduyoye 1995, 80).

African women theologians have critically observed and analysed the theological legitimisation of various forms of social oppression and stereotyping against women (Oduyoye 2002, 36). They have highlighted the biased presentation of women's identities by men, often generalising male experiences to encompass women by default and have identified male dominance within societal power structures. These theologians have embarked on a thorough interrogation of the subtle yet pervasive ways in which inculturation and liberation theologies, while ostensibly challenging Western hegemony, have paradoxically reinforced male supremacy by positioning men as 'Lords' over women (Oduyoye 2002, 36). This domination of women extends beyond the confines of the church, permeating societal realms where men are consistently privileged over women. Oduyoye laments the social installation of men as 'Lords over women,' solely based on their gender, within oppressive androcentric structures that define and confine women to male-centred notions, subjecting them to marginalisation and stigmatisation should they deviate from prescribed roles (Oduyoye 2002, 36). These insights provide the contextual backdrop for the theological writings and contributions of scholars like Fanusie, which are further explored in the next section.

The Main Theological Contribution of Fanusie

Within the burgeoning era of African theology, characterised by the ascendancy of inculturation and liberation models, Fanusie emerged as a pioneering figure, offering groundbreaking contributions to African theological discourse (Fanusie 1989, 96). Central to her theological framework are two key concepts: 'Deculturalisation' and

‘trans-culturalisation’ (Fanusie 1989, 96). In her advocacy for ‘deculturalisation,’ Fanusie asserts that while Christ acknowledged and valued culture, he also recognised the imperative for change (Fanusie 1989: 94). She advocates for a critical review of African rituals, acknowledging their varying implications on individuals while challenging dehumanising practices (Fanusie 1989, 95). Regarding ‘trans-culturalisation,’ Fanusie contends that God neither disregards culture nor condones practices that dehumanise others; instead, she asserts that rituals with detrimental effects should undergo reform (Fanusie 1989, 95). Despite anticipating opposition to such transformative endeavours, Fanusie remains steadfast in her belief that change, aimed at enhancing life, is indispensable (Fanusie 1989, 95). She envisions the Circle as a catalyst for lifting women worldwide from degradation to esteem through its commitment to depatriarchalising texts and interpretations thereby fostering transformative cultural hermeneutics (Fanusie 1989, 96). Fanusie’s influential works, including ‘*Christianity and African Rituals*’; ‘*Sexuality and Women in African Culture*’ and ‘*Women and the Church (Protestant)*’ underscore her profound impact on African theological scholarship (Ede and Ekeya, 1988). They give the most famous quote of Fanusie thus, “The Active involvement of women in the church can only be a reality when women are seen as real people, created in God’s image.”

Through her writings, Fanusie advocates for the active involvement of women in the church, grounded in the recognition of their inherent dignity as bearers of God’s image.

Conclusion

Fanusie’s upbringing within a patriarchal social context notwithstanding, her embrace of knowledge empowered her to offer a distinctive contribution to contemporary theological discourse. As a founding member of the Circle in 1989, Fanusie, alongside her peers, actively contested male-centric interpretations of texts that perpetuated patriarchal norms and the oppression of women. This collective endeavor exemplified a commitment to critical cultural and intersectional hermeneutics, setting forth a paradigm for biblical interpretation aimed at emancipating women from pervasive male domination within familial, ecclesiastical and societal spheres.

Notes

- i. Rising Stars are newer members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians who are being mentored by seasoned academics within the Circle.

Bibliography

Dube, M.W. and Wafula, R.S. (eds.) *Postcoloniality, Translation and the Bible in Africa*. Eugene, OR: Wipf Publishers, 2017.

- Dube, M.W. "Talitha Cum Hermeneutics: Some African Ways of Reading the Bible." In *Twenty-five Years of Liberation Theology*, edited by H. Botha, 133–145. Atlanta: SBL, 2009.
- Edet R. and Ekeya B. "Church Women of Africa: A Theological Community." In Fabella, Virginia and Oduyoye, Mercy A. (eds.). *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology: Reflections From the Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*, 3–13. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1988.
- Fanusie, L. "Christianity and African Rituals, Matthew 11: 25–30, Leviticus 12:1–5, Luke 2: 21–24." In *Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians 1989*, edited by Mercy A. Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 93–97. Accra: Trinity Theological College, 1989.
- . "Sexuality and Women in African Culture." In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy A. Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, 162–166. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
- . "Women and the Church (Protestant)." Paper presented at EATWOT Women's Commission, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, August 1986.
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. "Interpreting Old Testament Polygamy through African Eyes." In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy A. Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, 87–99. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992.
- Obeng, E.A. "Synthetic and Praxis Models in African Theology." In *Theological Method and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, edited by Mary Getui, 41–54. Nairobi: Acton, 1998.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Theological Education for Women in Africa: 1978–1996, A Sample Survey." In *Transforming Power, Women in the Household of God: Proceedings of the Pan-African Conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*, edited by Mercy A. Oduyoye, 63. Accra: Sam-Woode Limited, 1997.
- . "Theological Reflections on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement, from a West African Perspective." In *Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement: A Report from a Research Conference in Uppsala*, edited by Katharina Hallencreutz, 35–40. Uppsala, 2002.
- . *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.
- "Online Memorial of Fanusie Lloyd." *ForeverMissed.com*. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.forevermissed.com>.
- Price, M. and Skolnic, A. "Gender Identity." In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Psychology and Gender*, edited by Kevin L. Nadal, 2–8. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017.
- Tshehla, M.S. "Gendered African Biblical Scholarship: An Ode to Talitha." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5294>
- Vanhoozer, K.J., Anderson, C.A. and Sleasman, M.J. (eds.) *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends: Cultural Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Chapter 61

A FORGOTTEN MATRIARCH? PATIENCE DICKSON

Lawrencia Manu-Boampong

To the Woman Unspoken and Unheard Of, not even the internet could give information concerning this woman: No ancestry, age, place of birth, activity, etc. were found regarding this woman. The said family she was likely to be traced to, had nothing written about her.

Many times, there may be women who may have made their marks on the sands of history but have nothing written about them. Patriarchy and male chauvinism, especially in our African Communities (tracing to Biblical history) among other factors, may have contributed to the erasure or absence of such women from written history.

To Patience Dickson, a woman who may have served her days but not written of, so unspoken and unheard of:

This woman may have at least served on some Church committees, have been a mother, a sister and a wife, but yet nothing is written about her. She is not mentioned in any of the theological works of Prof. K.A. Dickson, the said relative.

To you great woman and other great women who may have contributed their quota but yet unspoken and Unheard of, I share this Prayer (Partly from the Catholic Prayer for the forgotten dead and also from the Covenant Prayer of the Methodist Church Ghana):

O merciful God, take pity on those souls who have no particular friends and intercessors to recommend them to You, who either through the negligence of those that are alive or through length of time are forgotten by their family, friends and all. Let their lives, though unheard of, serve as an inspiration to others, especially women, who no one is talking about but yet gave or are giving their best to serve their present and future generation.

Bring us to terms that we are no longer our own, but Yours. So put us to what You will and rank us with whom You will. Let us be employed for You or laid aside for You; Exalted for You or brought low for You. Whiles the souls of the faithful departed such as Patience Dickson keep resting on, raise other women who would give out their best whether in obscurity or in the limelight. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 62

BIOGRAPHY OF REV. MARGARET BUECHNER ASIAMAH. AMPADU-DAADUAM(RTD) (NEE MARGARET BUECHNER APPIANIMAA BOAMA-SECU)

Joyce Boham

Introduction

This chapter delves into the life journey of The Rev. Margaret Yaa Appianiimaa Buechner Asiaamah Ampadu-Daaduam (formerly Rev. Margaret Buechner A. Boama-Secu), examining the influence of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, on her personal and ministerial development and subsequently, its broader impact on individuals within her sphere of influence, particularly women associated with the Circle. The insights presented in this chapter are drawn from an interview conducted with Ampadu-Daaduam on 8 Jan 2022. Through this exploration, the chapter illuminates both the transformative effects and the challenges encountered by Ampadu-Daaduam, offering valuable lessons for navigating future endeavours within the context of the Circle and beyond.

Brief Background of Upbringing

The Rev. Margaret Yaa Appianiimaa Buechner Asiaamah Ampadu-Daaduam was born to the late Rev. Andrew Ramseyer Secu (Nee Yaw Boama) and the late Gladys Mina Serwaa on 6 January 1947. Although her father originated from Bompata and her mother from Morso, both in the Asante Akyem District of the Ashanti Region, Ampadu-Daaduam was born in Kumasi, the capital town of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. She was born on Thursday, hence her name ‘Yaa’. As the first of seven children of her parents, Ampadu-Daaduam learned how to care for her siblings and played a key role in her family. She was trained to accept that being female cannot deter one from achieving one’s dreams (Ampadu-Daaduam 2022).

Ampadu-Daaduam was deeply rooted in the Presbyterian tradition, a heritage she inherited from her father, the late Rev. Andrew Ramseyer Secu and her late grandfather, Rev. Andreas Ramsey Secu, a missionary. Notably, Rev. Andreas Ramsey Secu had adopted a four-year-old slave, the late Sir Bounar, who later

served as a clerk in the colonial government, overseeing gun licensing. Both Margaret and her grandfather were Presbyterian ministers with Margaret being the eldest of seven siblings, comprising two sisters and four brothers. Raised predominantly in the manse during her formative years, Margaret received a rigorous Presbyterian upbringing. She later entered into marriage with Rev. Kofi Asiamah Ampadu-Daadam with whom she had four children and numerous grandchildren (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Educational Training

Ampadu-Daadam commenced her primary education at the tender age of four at Ejusu Presbyterian Primary School where her father served as the catechist overseeing the congregation. Subsequently, she advanced to Beposo Middle School, while residing with her paternal uncle in Nsuta Beposo. Her educational journey continued at Aburi Girls Secondary School, now known as Aburi Girls Senior High School renowned for its missionary origins in Ghana's Eastern Region. However, her schooling at Aburi was interrupted by a chronic stomach ailment, necessitating a departure after four out of the seven required years from 1961 to 1965 for an extended medical sojourn at Agogo Presbyterian Hospital. Despite her health challenges, Ampadu-Daadam demonstrated exceptional academic prowess during her treatment, prompting the principal of Agogo Presbyterian Teacher Training College to recommend her for promotional examinations typically reserved for students in Teacher Training One and Two (T1/T2). Excelling in these exams, Ampadu-Daadam was swiftly promoted to T3. Consequently, she completed her four-year teacher training programme in a condensed timeframe from 1966 to 1968, graduating with a Teachers Certificate 'A' in 1968 (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Experiences as a Female Seminarian

In 1971, Ampadu-Daadam began her academic pursuit of religious studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, enrolling the diploma course in Religious Studies, which she successfully completed in 1973. Following a brief period of employment, Margaret resumed her theological education in 1979 at Trinity College Legon, now Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, where she embarked on her ministerial training. Notably, Ampadu-Daadam's enrolment marked a significant milestone as she became the first female student on the Trinity College campus at that time. Subsequently, Mercy Afia Adjei Dankyi, also of the Presbyterian denomination, joined her ranks. However, the absence of accommodation designated for female students at the Seminary highlighted the prevailing reluctance within churches to accept women into ordained ministry, necessitating Ampadu-Daadam to endure inadequate housing conditions, including a leaky single room shared with Mercy Adjei Dankyi. Despite these challenges, Ampadu-Daadam pursued her studies diligently, benefiting from a special arrangement that allowed degree or diploma

graduates in Religious Studies to undertake a condensed one-year ministerial training.

This programme involved attending classes at both Trinity Theological Seminary and the University of Ghana, Legon. During this period, she also served as a Teaching Assistant to lecturers, alongside her ministerial mate, Setri Nyomi, now Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, who later became a prominent figure within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Ampadu-Daadam's commitment to her faith and ministry was evident, leading to her commissioning as the first female minister from Trinity College on 22 Jun 1980 by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. She was subsequently appointed as the Chaplain of Agogo Teacher Training College where she served with distinction. Later, Ampadu-Daadam pursued further education, obtaining a Master of Christian Education degree from Scarritt College for Christian Workers in Nashville, Tennessee with her thesis focusing on 'Experiencing God in Suffering and Hope.' She graduated with distinction. This comprehensive educational journey exemplifies Margaret's dedication to both her personal and ministerial development, serving as an inspiration for future generations of female theologians and ministers within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Working Life as a Teacher

After graduating from the University of Ghana in June 1973, Ampadu-Daadam was among the first group of university graduates in Ghana who had to serve their country in the National Service Programme before working. After her National Service, she taught at different Second-cycle schools at various levels and different levels, among others such as Kwahu Nkwatia Presbyterian Primary and Middle School and Sunyani Boahen Korkor Presbyterian Middle School. Ampadu-Daadam also taught at the Dunkwa-On-Offin Secondary School (now Boamponsem Senior High School) from 1974- 1975, serving as their Senior House Mistress and acting Chaplain. Ampadu-Daadam returned to Osei Kyeretwie Secondary School as the Senior House Mistress and then moved on to Kumasi Anglican School. Konongo Odumasi Secondary at Konongo etc. then proceeded as Chaplain/tutor of Agogo Presbyterian Teacher Training College and an Education Officer in two different education districts in Juaso and Konongo as District Girl-Child Officer, Paripathetic Officer among other duties (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Life in The Circle

As the inaugural female minister to graduate from Trinity Theological Seminary Legon, Ampadu-Daadam's entry into the African Women Theologians Conference in Nigeria in 1980 marked a pivotal moment in her career. During this nascent phase of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, she was appointed as the Chaplain and bestowed the honour of officiating the communion service, showcasing her pioneering role within the Circle. Her presence served as

a beacon of encouragement for other aspiring women in both Nigeria and Ghana, affirming their aspirations towards ordained ministry or theological studies. For Ampadu-Daadam, the Circle provided a vital platform to articulate her concerns regarding women's issues, offering a supportive environment within faith-based organisations. Through the Circle's mission to foster research, writing and publication from a woman's perspective, Ampadu-Daadam found empowerment and solidarity, enabling her to contribute to the advancement of knowledge within theological and missionary contexts. As one of the few female theologians in Africa at the time, Ampadu-Daadam recognised the significance of amplifying the voices of African women within theological discussions concerning women's issues.

The Circle equipped Ampadu-Daadam with the language and confidence to articulate her arguments effectively, while also providing a network of support and guidance amidst the challenges she faced in her ministry. Despite encountering resistance and earning various nicknames upon joining the Circle, Ampadu-Daadam's involvement elevated her profile and led to invitations to represent the Church at conferences. Despite not being academically inclined, Ampadu-Daadam derived substantial benefits from her participation in the Circle, enhancing her ministerial effectiveness. Throughout her career, Ampadu-Daadam's unwavering faith in God's providence, grounded in Matthew 28:20, fueled her resilience and determination, inspiring her to overcome obstacles with the assurance that divine support accompanied her endeavours. Her steadfast belief in God's presence amidst life's storms resonated in her constant encouragement to others, reinforcing the notion that with God, all challenges could be surmounted (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Lessons from Ampadu-Daadam life's journey

The life journey of Rev. Margaret Ampadu-Daadam was characterised by numerous obstacles and challenges, often stemming from societal perceptions of gender roles and capabilities, as elucidated by Mercy Oduyoye's concept of 'status incompatibility' (Oduyoye, 2019, 3). Despite facing skepticism and discrimination due to her gender, Ampadu-Daadam remained resolute, focused and unwavering in her resolve, sending a clear message to those who underestimated her abilities. Her commitment to truthfulness and steadfastness safeguarded her against any ill intentions from male colleagues. An illustrative incident occurred during her time at the Seminary when she firmly rebuked a classmate who made inappropriate advances, demonstrating her firm stance on moral principles and her identity as a strict disciplinarian, adept mediator and counsellor among her peers. Beyond her professional endeavours, Ampadu-Daadam emerged as a pillar of strength within her extended and nuclear families, earning admiration from her relatives, husband, children and grandchildren. While Ampadu-Daadam did not prioritise writing and publishing, she played a crucial role in inspiring women within the church,

particularly pastors' spouses, to recognise their worth and pursue educational and professional advancement. As a pastor's daughter, wife and grandchild, Ampadu-Daadam's encouragement carried significant weight, motivating others to strive for personal and familial fulfilment and societal respectability (Ampadu-Daadam 2022).

Conclusion

Reverend Margaret Buechner A. Ampadu-Daadam emerged as a prominent figure characterised by her exceptional leadership, teaching prowess and unwavering dedication to pastoral duties within the religious community. Despite societal expectations and gender norms, her status as a female did not impede her pursuit of her aspirations. Ampadu-Daadam's reputation as a strict disciplinarian, adept mediator and counsellor garnered admiration, underscoring her multifaceted talents and invaluable contributions. Rooted in her profound faith, she cultivated her ministry with a steadfast focus on spiritual guidance and shared her insights and experiences through engagement with The Circle, a platform that provided vital support for her ambitious endeavours and amplified her voice. Reverend Ampadu-Daadam exerted a significant influence on her family, including her husband, children and grandchildren, as well as all who crossed her path, leaving an indelible mark through her determined advocacy for women's perspectives on various issues. This unwavering commitment to advocating for women's voices emerged as a defining challenge that she embraced as her inherent right, grounded in her belief in the intrinsic dignity of all individuals as creations in the image of God. Presently retired from both the Ghana Education Service as a teacher since January 2007 and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana since August 2017, Margaret's legacy continues to resonate within both ecclesiastical and educational spheres.

Bibliography

- Ampadu-Daadam, Margaret Buechner Asiamah. Interview by Joyce Boham, January 8, 2022.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Re-membering Me: Memoires of Mercy Amba Oduyoye*. Ibadan: Sefer, 2019.

Chapter 63

ROSE ZOÉ OBIANGA, A LIFE, A WRITING

Gertrude Tokam and Fidèle Fifamè Houssou

Introduction

History is marked by a succession of men and/or women who each in their own way laid the foundations of a solid and lasting construction. The history of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, henceforth, the Circle, is part of this dynamic. Since the creation of this Circle, women remarkable for their openness, sense of sharing and sacrifice have enabled the movement to evolve, to grow, to be heard and to carry the cries and desires of African women as a whole and in an interreligious and intercultural manner. These women have worked to enable the Circle to achieve its objectives beyond the difficulties and adversities encountered on both sides. The matriarch, Rose Zoé is one of these great women who have left their mark on the history and the life of the Circle. But who is Rose Zoé? What are her works? What influence has she had on the younger generation in particular? The answer to these questions will enable us to discover this icon of the Circle. To gather the necessary information, we gathered data through interviews with her.

Obianga, a Presbyterian Christian Serving the Women's Cause

Obianga, affectionately known as Rose Zoé, stands as a pivotal figure in African theological discourse, particularly within the framework of women's concerns. She is a founding member of the Circle. Hailing from Cameroon, a nation celebrated for its cultural diversity and geographical significance in Central Africa, she embodies a committed Christian identity alongside her distinguished intellectual pursuits, actively contributing to both theological scholarship and the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. With a career spanning teaching roles in universities across Cameroon and Gabon, Obianga exemplifies a dedication to education and critical inquiry. Her life and works exemplify the compatibility of spirituality and academia and underscore the importance of amplifying marginalised voices in theological discussions. Obianga's life story and scholarship highlight the transformative power of education in addressing societal and theological challenges within the African context (Obianga 2021; 2022).

Obianga's Life

Obianga was born on 26 December 1943, in Oubangui Chari, presently known as the Central African Republic (CAR), to Cameroonian lineage. Her early education was conducted in CAR, encompassing primary schooling and a portion of her secondary education. Following the completion of her Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle (BEPC), she journeyed to France in 1961. Subsequently, from 1962 to 1965, she pursued her secondary studies culminating in the attainment of her Baccalauréat A4 in France. She furthered her academic pursuits at the universities of Nancy and Strasbourg where she earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in linguistics, before obtaining her Doctorate in Linguistics with a specialisation in Experimental Phonetics. Upon her return to Cameroon, she assumed instructional roles in Linguistics and Experimental Phonetics at the University of Yaoundé, as well as within theological faculties in Yaoundé, Bibia, Foulassi (Cameroon) and Bitam (Gabon) for an extensive duration until her retirement.

Presently, she dedicates her time to religious service within her church and engages fervently in activities with the Christian Women's Association (ACF). On 9 April 1966, Obianga entered matrimony with Jean Samuel Zoé Obianga. The latter holds positions of significance as a pastor within the Cameroon Presbyterian Church (EPC) and as a professor specialising in ethics. Together, they were blessed with four children. Our encounters with her took place during our interviews at the Women's Home known as 'La Samaritaine' Djoungolo, situated in close proximity to the Faculty of Theology in Yaoundé. Renowned for her vivacious demeanor and unwavering zest for life, despite the passage of time, Obianga remains a captivating individual with whom we had the privilege of sharing delightful moments (Obianga 2021; 2022).

Her Theological Education and Ecumenical Commitment

Obianga's academic journey traversed a wide range of disciplines from linguistics to theology, spurred by her upbringing in a devout Christian household. Her theological pursuits commenced at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Strasbourg, deepening her interest in theological studies. Subsequently, she furthered her theological education in New York for a duration of two years, specialising in the field of 'Christian Women's Association.' Her theological acumen and dedication to the Church culminated in her consecration as a Church Elder in 1975 within the Cameroonian Presbyterian Church (EPC), concurrently maintaining an active role within the Association of Christian Women (ACF) of the same Church. Engaging in ecumenical networks, she extended her influence at the African level through membership in the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (AOTA) and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), alongside serving as Vice-President of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and participating in the World Council of Churches (WCC). Obianga's trajectory epitomises a transition from specialised university education in linguistics to a

fervent pursuit of theology, driven by an unwavering passion. Through her diverse experiences, she cultivated a theological discourse deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and religious milieu of her environment (Obianga 2021; 2022).

Socio-cultural and Religious Context of Rose Zoé's Views

The theological perspective of Obianga flourishes within a distinct socio-cultural and religious milieu, particularly within her native Cameroon. Born and raised amidst conditions marked by pervasive poverty, destitution and disease, prevailing as daily realities among the populace encompassing men, women and youth alike, Cameroon occupies a significant position among African nations grappling with poverty and substantial indebtedness, despite possessing abundant human, economic and natural resources. Consequently, such circumstances engender systemic inequalities and injustices within society, notably exacerbating challenges faced by girls and women. Often bearing the brunt of these adverse conditions, women find themselves relegated to the margins, marginalised and disadvantaged across various spheres. In the realm of education, for instance, preference is typically accorded to males, relegating young girls to domestic roles and ultimately destined for early and forced marriages aimed at alleviating the dire financial circumstances of their families (Obianga 2021; 2022).

On the Cultural Level

Within Cameroonian society, a prevailing state of masculinisation and patriarchal dominance perpetuates the marginalisation and silencing of women, denying them the space and agency to express themselves. Subjected to oppressive and dehumanising practices under the guise of tradition or cultural norms, women endure a multitude of indignities including sexual and genital mutilation, the exploitative institution of polygamy, various forms of violence, coerced and premature marriages, as well as ritualistic practices associated with widowhood, prominently featuring the levirate tradition. Such systematic maltreatment and exclusion manifest in manifold forms of violence, including but not limited to rape and discrimination, effectively reducing women to commodities devoid of intrinsic worth and disregarding their status as beings created in the divine image (Genesis 1:27). Consequently, this dehumanising environment engenders profound feelings of frustration, illness, depression and even mortality among women (Obianga 2021; 2022).

On the Religious Level

The church appears to be falling short in fully embracing its role and is increasingly diverging from truth. The church boasts a substantial presence of women, yet their marginalisation persists. Excluded from decision-making bodies, sidelined in pastoral ministry and encountering limited access to theological education, women

continue to grapple with patriarchal dominance within the church, impeding the authentic transmission of the Gospel message. According to Obianga, this state of affairs stems from the inheritance of patriarchal elements from Western Christianity, exacerbating pre-existing cultural norms. The church's abandonment of its mandate to advocate for justice, truth and social equilibrium is evident in Obianga's poignant inquiries:

'Can the African Church remain inert in self-reflection and innovation? Does it shun participation in the liberation struggle, which inherently concerns women, who are, after all, its maternal foundation? Does the African Church lack the resolve and creativity to dismantle structures that degrade and marginalise women?' (Obianga 1992, 239).

Despite this lament, Obianga maintains hope for repentance within established churches. Raised amidst such circumstances, she emerges as a resilient figure, educated and enlightened on issues confronting both society and the church. Her courage in confronting injustices and hindrances to gender equality and women's emancipation within the Church, particularly in Africa, aligns with the allegory of the cave by Plato, where individuals emerge from darkness into enlightenment. In this regard, Obianga embodies the role of being the "salt of the earth and light of the world" (Matthew 5:13), illuminating the path towards truth and liberation for those still ensnared in ignorance (Obianga 2021; 2022).

Contributions to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

Obianga, an esteemed figure among the French-speaking pioneers within the Circle, emerged alongside the primary architect of the Circle, Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Dr Obianga was affiliated with the EATWOT and held a position within the WCC. Her involvement in the genesis of the Circle dates back to 1988 when she collaborated with Oduyoye and others in the offices of the World Council of Churches in Geneva to devise strategies for its establishment. This foundational endeavour culminated in the convocation held in Accra in 1989, wherein Obianga was part of a cohort of women tasked with laying the groundwork, as documented by Oduyoye (1995).

Obiang has consistently advocated for the significance of the Circle's inception, viewing it as a laudable initiative poised to shape the landscape of theology and elevate the status of women across Africa. She underscores the imperative for women to unite amidst societal challenges, emphasising the amplification of their voices and contributions. Obiang has been instrumental in fostering the Circle's presence in Cameroon, collaborating notably with H  l  ne Yinda. Her engagement extends to Pan-African forums, notably serving as a resource person for the organisation of the Pan-African Conference in Yaound   in 2007. Continuing her unwavering commitment, Obiang remains an invaluable advisor to the Circle, particularly within its French-speaking contingent and in Cameroon. Her aspiration is to witness the Circle flourish, fulfilling its mandate as a beacon of enduring

enlightenment through scholarly research, writing and dissemination (Obianga 2021; 2022).

The Identity of the African Church

This thinking can be summarised in two main points: The identity of the African Church and the liberation of women.

Obiang militated for the identity of the African Church. For Bediako (1996, 2), the most critical issue in African theology is that of its identity. It is the source of all the ills that undermine the experience of faith in Africa. It is an experience that does not give a place of choice to women. According to Obianga, it is necessary to build a Church that does not allow itself to be dominated in its actions and orientation by another culture. This African Church must be original in its thinking and action. Obianga strongly denounces the negative influence of Western patriarchy in the African Church as one of the causes of women's marginalisation. The African Church must develop an originality that depends on the link between the Gospel and culture. The Gospel must enlighten culture for the well-being of man in general, for a better social life but also and above all for the happiness of women. Culture has negative and positive aspects. This is why it must be purged of the negative aspects that make it a subjugating and degrading tradition.

This thought is to some extent in line with the thinking of Paul Tillich (2000) who advocates theological dialogue with culture. In other words, the Gospel proclaimed must be lived in each context, taking into account existential realities. This is an apologetic theology of 'response' (Higuet 2004) to existential questions. A theology that enters into dialogue with the present situation, that is, with the scientific, artistic, economic, political and ethical forms in which humans express their creative interpretation of existence. This is why the Church in Africa is challenged to integrate the cultural dynamics of the people into its mission. There is, however, a distinction to be made between cultural richness to be preserved and a debasing tradition to be evacuated for the happiness of the people. Many African theologians recognise that the challenge for African churches is the relationship between faith and culture.

This clearly elaborated relationship will help the African man to live his faith intimately without alienating it or his identity. This is the condition for a global and integral development of man in his environment. This is why Kā Mana (2000) as well as Jean-Marc Ela (2003), propose to revise evangelisation and theology in the African way, in order to free ourselves from all burdens. For God is the one who does not oppress but grants the freedom to be at his service. This is what is called an African way of believing in the God of Jesus Christ. This is a reflection that is still relevant today because there is always a kind of conflicting or oppositional relationship between the Gospel and culture. Some continue to consider that there is an incompatibility between the two; for others, however, this relationship would simply give free rein to all practices, even those that are contrary to the Gospel.

The church, today, is faced with this challenge of achieving a balance which, while maintaining the Gospel's purity, does not uproot man from his living environment.

Women's Liberation

Obiang worked hard for the total liberation of women from the yoke of debasing tradition and the excesses of patriarchy. Women must also be freed from all forms of violence and oppression, injustice and inequality. She addressed the question of women's place and role in the church. There is a need to promote participatory leadership that takes into account all the forces within the church, male and female. It must be said that the church is a community of believers, confessing the one faith in the one God, Creator and Saviour of all. The new African theology must, therefore, refuse all exclusion and stigmatisation, insisting on the promotion of rights and freedoms and not sexual differences. The leaders' choices at all levels must be made not on the basis of gender but on the basis of gifts, charisma and potential for spiritual depth and value. The Holy Spirit works all things in all people (1 Cor. 12:11). The clericalism by which women are muzzled, silenced and conditioned to live in this way has no place in the church and does not follow directly from God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

In her reflection, the woman is also challenged when she writes:

It is partly our fault that we African women have so little work in the Church. We look men in the eye too much, we behave submissively and underminingly instead of making demands. This is a shortcoming that characterises the whole relationship between men and women in black Africa (Obianga 1992).

With this challenge, women must no longer limit themselves to victimisation, lamentations and accusations. She must leave resignation behind and ask herself what it is about herself that destroys her and hinders her in her actions. She must stop thinking that the fault lies only with the other person. A duty of introspection is necessary; a *metanoia*, a repentance through which there is a direction's change, transformation of mentality and even of paradigm. We must dare to say it. The woman must therefore be strong, courageous, determined, uncomplicated, efficient and above all a woman of prayer. The battle is won through action and prayer. Women are invited to show solidarity in their actions. Without a strengthened and flourishing sisterhood, development remains a utopia. A reflection that has certainly had repercussions deserve to be noted.

The Impact of Her Theological Thinking

The impact of this reflection as a whole is noted here in two dimensions: In contemporary theological thought, on the one hand and for the Circle of on the other.

In theological Contemporary Reflection

Obianga's (1992, 239) thought has the merit of entering into the set of elaborate reflections that highlight the great challenges of the Church and of women in the era of postmodernity in the African context, challenge of tradition and culture. In other words, the challenge of contextualising the Gospel without distorting its real content. The challenge of a relevant, effective and contextual mission in an environment marked by evils and plagues of all kinds. The challenge of gender relations. The issue of gender remains an important and very sensitive issue for the churches in general and those in Africa in particular. We must continue to re-read the Gospel not only through the eyes of men but through the eyes of men and women created in the image of God. Different but complementary, moving forward together in the fulfilment of the divine mission.

The condition of women is one of the key subjects in the author's thinking. Thus, the Church in Africa cannot be built and developed over time without truly integrating the women's place and role. This is why it is called to rise up against everything that is an obstacle to the development of women in the Church and in society. It is true that there has been progress in women's emancipation and liberation. Many women are integrated into the spheres of society. They are involved in the life of the Church in different ways but there is still a long way to go with several challenges such as the challenge of inclusive, participatory and impactful leadership, challenge in the exercise of its Christian, pastoral and other vocations, challenges of poverty, disease, inequality and injustice, violence and stigma.

The Circle's Impact on Obianga

The impact of all this reflection on the Circle can be seen in the short, medium and long term. In the short term, it is a reflection that took place in a specific context and time in the face of relevant questions that arose in the Church and in society. Issues that challenged women to wake up from their torpor, to get up and act. Obianga can be considered as "the voice of the marginalised,"

The one who sounded the alarm, who traced the path on which French-speaking women can continue to advance today and tomorrow.

In the medium term, it should be noted that this is a continuous reflection over time that calls for concrete actions that are always contextual. The actions of the Circle are in line with this dimension. To continue the fight for the well-being of the whole of humankind, for the happiness of humanity, of which women are the source of fecundity by their very nature. The challenges are many and involve various levels: Social, political, economic, cultural, spiritual and religious. We must continue to build a theology of response (Gabus 1955, 4) to the existential questions of humanity because humanity is constantly searching for its existential meaning. It is not only a question of developing a defensive theology but rather an offensive or attacking theology, which does not wait to see the problems posed to

solve them but which anticipates in order to propose solutions in advance, or better still to prevent them, a creative and inventive theology.

In the long term, we must be aware of one reality:

- If we want to fight against the evils and scourges that undermine society, the Church, the family and human relations,
- If we want to lay the solid foundations of a future society in which God's will, must be first, a society that advocates and lives justice, equality, truth and love,
- If we want to build a world free of rape and violence, of peace, in which love is inscribed in the hearts of men and women and is lived in a pleasant way,
- If we want to revalue women and lead them to play their role and assume their full responsibility in all places and circumstances and
- If we also want to live a contextual gospel, then we must start today.

Sowing the little mustard seed that will produce a great tree on which the birds of the world will find refuge, under which travellers on all sides will find true rest in the shade (Luke 13: 19). This is the reality of the God's Kingdom on the move among people. A real place for meeting, sharing, communion and exchange. Every theologian must be challenged today to write the history that will begin to be read today and that will continue to be read tomorrow and by the generations to come. It is a sacred duty that challenges each of us afterwards.

Conclusion

The life and work of the matriarch Obianga remain an inexhaustible source of motivation for present and future generations. Her ideas and positions challenge the African Church in its mission in an increasingly globalised context marked by multiple challenges, in a society with multiple ills and scourges. Theologians of diverse backgrounds, especially African women theologians, are called to continue to develop an African theology that takes into account the context's realities. To develop a theological discourse that takes into account the existential dimension is not only a question of taking up and rejoicing over elements of this theology built by Obianga but of appropriating the key elements and finding in them the basic instruments from which we must still today lay solid foundations to move forward. It is therefore a bottle thrown into the sea. Whoever finds it, must use it.

Bibliography

- Bediako, K. "Understanding African Theology in the 20th Century." *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa* 3, no. 2 (1996): 1–11.
- Ela, J. *Repenser la théologie africaine: Le Dieu qui libère*. Paris: Karthala, 2003.
- Fiedler, R.N. and Hofmeyr, J.W. "The Conception of the Circle of Committed African Female Theologians: Is It African or Western?" *Acta Theologica* 31, no. 1 (2011): 39–57.
- Gabus, J. "La théologie systématique de Paul Tillich." *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 35, no. 4 (1955): 454–477.

- Higuet, E.A. "Paul Tillich's 'Apologetic' Theology of Culture: Depth and Surface in the Quest for Meaning." 2004. <https://www.academia.edu>.
- Kä M. *Nouvelle évangélisation en Afrique*. Yaoundé: CLE, 2000.
- Obianga, R.Z. "Quand l'Église en Afrique deviendra-t-elle africaine?" *Concilium: Revue internationale de théologie*, no. 239 (February 1992): 95–103.
- . "The Meeting of the Gospel and Culture in the Experience of an African Woman." *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 334 (1995): 287–294.
- . "The Western Church Has Strengthened the Patriarchy in Africa." *Trouw*, July 8, 1994. <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/western-church-has-strengthened-patriarchy-in-africa~b76a1565/>.
- . Interview by Gertrude Tokam and Fidèle Fifamè Houssou, 2021.
- . Interview by Gertrude Tokam and Fidèle Fifamè Houssou, 2022.
- Oduyoye, M.A. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Tillich, P. *The Courage to Be*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

PART V

**AFRICAN DIASPORIC FOUNDING
MEMBERS**

Chapter 64

REVEREND PROFESSOR KATIE GENEVA CANNON: A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE CIRCLE

Yvonne Winfildah Takawira-Matwaya

Introduction

Kannapolis, North Carolina, United States of America bore witness to the arrival of Katie Geneva Cannon on 3 Jan 1950. Raised within a tightly knit black community, she encountered the harsh realities of segregation where access to public amenities such as libraries, parks and swimming pools was severely limited. However, amidst this atmosphere of racial discrimination, the church and the local black school served as sanctuaries where she could freely engage. This stark juxtaposition between the teachings of Christianity and the racial prejudices she experienced created a profound dissonance for Cannon.

As the third generation of free African American post-slavery, Cannon grew up among six siblings in a household led by her parents, Esau and Emanuelette Corine Lytle Cannon, both esteemed elders within the Presbyterian Church. Notably, her mother held the distinction of being the first woman to be employed at the Cannon Mills, a milestone that may have influenced Cannon's later scholarly pursuits. Raised as a 'PK,' or preacher's kid, Cannon was immersed in the rich tapestry of church life from an early age, drawing inspiration from the faith of her maternal ancestors and experiencing a life unbounded by the limitations often associated with traditional religious upbringing (Cannon 2017).

Educational History

Katie's educational journey commenced at the tender age of three, as she embarked on her kindergarten education at a Lutheran school. Here, the teachings centred around God's love stood in stark contrast to the harsh realities of racial injustice prevalent in the broader society. It was during this formative period that Katie began to question the pervasive practice of racism, grappling with its incongruence with the principles of love and equality espoused in her religious education. While her parents remained largely silent on the topic of racial segregation, they

encouraged her to engage with viewpoints addressing the issue, allowing Katie to piece together her own understanding.

In 1967, Katie graduated from George Washington Carver High School in Kannapolis, North Carolina. Subsequently, she pursued higher education, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina, in 1971. Continuing her academic pursuits, she attained a Master of Divinity degree from the Interdenominational Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1974 (Nelsen 2018). Notably, Katie Cannon's academic trajectory was marked by a series of groundbreaking achievements, culminating in her distinction as the first black woman to receive a PhD from Union Theological Seminary in 1983 (The Seattle School 2019).

Work History

The Catawba Presbytery pastors' ordination on 24 Apr 1974 in Shelby, North Carolina made Katie the 155th female pastor. It became a conspicuous event as she became the first African American woman to be ordained in the United Presbyterian Church, USA. Cannon was identified as a theological trailblazer as she was able to push past boundaries (North and Hall 2022). She worked at Ascension Presbyterian Church in East Harlem, New York (Lazarus 2018; Nelsen 2018) after earning her doctoral degree at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1983. Katie was also a visiting Professor at Harvard Divinity School, Episcopal Divinity schools in Cambridge, Yale Divinity School and Wellesley College. Cannon spent nine years as a Religion Studies professor at Temple University in Philadelphia before joining the Faculty of Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond in 2001. Until her death in 2018, she served as the Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Social Ethics. Katie pioneered a new branch of faith called Womanist Ethics (Sims 2019). Womanist Ethics largely propose that the view of God's creation is more expansive and more diverse when it is informed by the moral wisdom in the everyday lives of black women (Lazarus 2018). Cannon was also inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, which began ushering in change during her prime years. This propelled her to use her position as a teacher, scholar, author and globetrotting speaker to advocate for this broader and more diverse view of religious and ethical thought (Lazarus 2018).

In 2012, Cannon began serving as executive director of the Squaring the Womanist Circle Project at Union Presbyterian Seminary. The project culminated in Cannon working with the administration of Union Presbyterian Seminary and several foundations to establish The Center for Womanist Leadership (CWL) in 2018. Consequently, she developed a special emphasis on fresh, black-oriented, female-centred theology. Slated on the 44th anniversary of her historic ordination and despite battling leukaemia, Katie co-organised the Center's inaugural conference in Richmond that drew 250 religious scholars from across the USA. The event featured 14 prominent African-American women speakers, including

Alice Walker, the activist and author of *The Color Purple*. The conference was followed up by weekend lectures, workshops and strategy sessions on communal transformation and empowerment of women of colour (Lazarus 2018). The Centre was renamed The Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership in 2019 by the Union Presbyterian Seminary Trustees. It remains a place where women of African ancestry wrestle with actualising the deepest possibilities of human existence (Amoah 2019). Rev. Professor Cannon was also a founding board member of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (FSR), where she served for decades until her passing in 2018. Cannon was a past president of the Society for the Study of Black Religion.

A number of awards are attached to Professor Cannon. Among others, as compiled by Lazarus, they included: The distinguished professor award from Spelman College; the Lucy Craft Laney Award at the Black Presbyterian Bicentennial Celebration; the Spelman College's Distinguished Professor Award and also a professor-scholar honoree at the National Black Church Summit at Emory University. Cannon also received Virginia Union University's School of Theology the Beautiful Are The Feet Award from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. The American Academy of Religion honoured Cannon with its 2011 Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2018, Cannon was honoured at the Presbyterian Church's (USA)'s General Assembly, receiving the Excellence in Theological Education Award. She also received the Union Medal, the highest award of distinction presented by Union Theological Seminary in New York City (2018).

Participation in the Circle Formation

When the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was launched in September 1989 in Accra, Ghana, Cannon was there to provide ecumenical accompaniment (Union Collective 2018). Oduyoye remembered Katie being on the Faculty of the Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) when she arrived at Harvard University as a lecturer and research fellow in the Women in Religion programme of the Harvard Divinity School for the 1985–86 academic year. Katie, who had been in the programme from 1983 to 1984 as the first African American, familiarised Oduyoye with the programme and her life at Harvard and helped in whatever way she could. Cannon invited Oduyoye to her classes and they incessantly discussed issues of women in theology including theological perspectives of/on women characters in novels by persons of African descent. Hence, they ended up creating a genre of 'sourcing' theology from creative writings (Oduyoye 2019). Discussions about Alice Walker's word, 'womanist' featured a lot, which Oduyoye said had its origin in the Akan word for 'precocious girls' (2019). Their discussions continued on what constitutes oppression and liberation for African and African American women. Dr Katie Cannon and Dr Connie Buchanan bought into Oduyoye's vision of the possibility of bringing together African women in theology, which resulted in the founding of The Circle of Concerned African Theologians (The Circle).

Katie Cannon was at the Convocation of African Women Theologians in 1989 held under the theme *Talitha Qumi* and wrote the foreword to the book *The Will to Arise* (1992: vii-viii). The book became the first of the anthologies from the theological efforts of biennial institutes of The Circle. Cannon was one of three in the category of participants from the African Diaspora. The other two were Dr Jacquelyn Grant from the United States and Verna Cassels from Jamaica.

In her foreword to *The Will to Arise*, Katie described the essays as “the dialogue between an actual world and a possible world,” A description that proved to be a most accurate overview of what The Circle stood for.

Researching, critiquing, doing and sharing theology from African cultural contexts has meant envisioning the world, the human community and women’s lives as God would have them be. Katie Cannon writes as follows:

Women of the African diaspora cannot afford to escape from being involved in African women’s judgments that are not only cultural but ultimately theological. Our African sisters confront us with relevant facts that open possibilities before us so that we become aware of constrictions that hem us in and burdens that oppress (1992: vii).

Cannon became one of the founding members who helped The Circle start off with her personal funds (Oduyoye, 2019).

Outstanding Citation/Quotes

‘Womanism is a framework that puts in evidence the experiences of Black women and uses their lenses to see the world in a critical, intersectional and methodological manner.’ (Cannon 1995:5)

‘We criticise what we know, how we know, the way we go about knowing and what we do with the knowledge we have’ (Cannon 2012).

‘I’m going to give you the best I have, so you can be better.’(Cannon 2018)

‘For 45 years I have been teaching how to teach by body-mediated knowledge, thinking with our hearts and feeling with our brains’ (Cannon 2017).

‘Teaching is my ministry. I love teaching to empower, to equip, to set people free’ (Cannon 2018).

Major Theological Ideas

Professor Cannon forged Womanist ethics. Womanist, a concept coined by Alice Walker, fashioned the perspectives and literary traditions of black women into revolutionary discourse for the church, academy and society at large. Katie deployed methods of Christian social ethics to new advantage, creating a space for the unheard to be heard, the inconsolable to be comforted, the beaten down to rise and the disenfranchised to discover and celebrate their own innate moral wisdom (Union Collective 2018). Cannon expanded Walker’s term to apply it theologically to examine the expressive products of oral culture that deal with a perennial quest

for liberation. Additionally, incorporating written literature that invites African Americans to recognise the distinction between nature in its inevitability and culture in its changeability. These thoughts are captured in *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (Sims 2019). Katie being a ground breaker is credited for launching the foundational voice in womanist theology, which seeks to escape the paternalistic and supremacist white-centred views of religion and ethics. The focus was diverted to the experiences and insights of black women in those areas. Professor Katie Geneva Cannon was an astute scholar who wrote and published extensively; here I cited only three of her publications.

Bibliography

- Amoah, E. "A Tribute to Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 131–133. Indiana University Press on behalf of FSR, Inc. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jfemistudreli.35.2.19>.
- Cannon, K.G. "Eliminating Ignorance." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 32, no. 1 (2016): 114–20. Indiana University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.32.1.11>.
- Cannon, K.G. "Thinking with Our Hearts/Feeling with Our Brains: Testimonies of Faith that History Might Otherwise Forget." *Women In Ministry 2017 Conference Keynote Address*. Princeton Theological Seminary, USA, December 2017. www.youtube.com.
- . "Revolutionaries in Zion: The Gumption to Challenge Dominated Forms of Knowledge Acquisition and Religious Power." *6th Annual C. Shelby Rooks Lecture*, Center for the Study of Black Faith & Chicago Theological Seminary, USA, 2012. www.youtube.com.
- . "Excellence in Theological Education Award Acceptance Speech." *Presbyterian Church USA General Assembly*, St. Louis, 2018. www.vimeo.com.
- . *From Women Wisdom Comes the Way: Walking Together*. Ohio: Seminary Quarter, 1977.
- . "In Celebration of African American Women's Religious Activism." *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 3 (2011): 349–53. <https://doi.org/10.5323/jafriamerhist.96.3.0348>.
- Lazarus, J.M. "Dr. Katie G. Cannon, Renowned Scholar Who Elevated Role of Black Women in Theology, Dies at 68." *Richmond Free Press*, 2018. <https://richmondfreepress.com/>.
- Nielsen, E. "Katie Geneva Cannon (1950–2018)." *BlackPast.org*, September 18, 2018. <https://www.blackpast.org>.
- North, E. and Hall, S. "The Legacy Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon Left in Richmond and Theology, Honoring Black History." *WRIC*, 2022. <https://www.wric.com/>.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Katie and I." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 2 (2019): 137–139. Indiana University Press on behalf of FSR, Inc. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jfemistudreli.35.2.21>.
- Sims, A.D. "The Womanist Theology of Katie Geneva Cannon Lives On." *Religion and Politics*, 2019. <https://religionandpolitics.org/>.
- Union Collective. "In Memoriam: The Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon." *Union Theological Seminary*, 2018. <https://utsnyc.edu/>.
- The Seattle School. "8 Theologians and Women of Color You Should Be Reading." *The Seattle School*, 2019. <https://theseattleschool.edu/>.
- Walker, A. *The Color Purple*. Penguin Books, 1982

Chapter 65

DR JACQUELYN GRANT: A MOTHER OF WOMANIST THEOLOGY

Ericka Shawndricka Dunbar

Introduction

Known as one of the mothers of Womanist Theology, Jacquelyn Grant is a mover, a shaker and a womanist liberator. Not only does she promote the liberation and advancement of the oppressed but she has been a lifelong advocate of black women and a supporter of their struggles toward recognition of full humanity. She is heralded as a prophetic protagonist who both resists the marginalisation and abuse of subjugated people as a whole and continues to educate and liberate the unliberated and ‘liberated’ alike. By ‘liberated,’ I mean those who developed liberation theologies but failed to acknowledge and challenge intersectional oppression generally and specifically failed to acknowledge and nuance the distinct ways black women experience oppression. The work of Dr Jacquelyn Grant intersects with the work of many of the sisters within the Circle; their scholarship and collaboration have been inspirational and transformative, promoting theologies that seek to eradicate intersectional gender, class and race inequalities in the church, academy and society.

A Biographical Sketch of Jacquelyn Grant

Dr Jacquelyn Grant was born on 19 December 1948 in Georgetown, South Carolina. She is one of nine children of the late Rev. Joseph James and the late Mrs Lillie Mae Ward Grant. Dr Grant attended both Catholic and public schools during her primary school years and graduated from Howard High School in 1966. She then completed her undergraduate studies at Bennett College (BA, 1970) and graduate studies at Turner Theological Seminary (TTS) at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC, MDiv, 1973) and Union Theological Seminary, New York (UTS, PhD, 1985). She was the first African-American woman to obtain a PhD in Systematic Theology, nationwide. She received four honorary degrees:

Payne Theological Seminary (1996), Turner Theological Seminary at ITC (2004), Bennett College (2010) and Chicago Theological Seminary (2016).

Dr Grant was a visiting professor in the Women and Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School (HDS), Harvard University (1977–1979). This was followed by a year as a scholar at the DuBois Institute of Afro-American Research at Harvard University (1979–1980). In 1980, Dr Grant joined the Faculty of ITC, where she taught for more than 40 years. She was the Fuller E. Callaway Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology. During her time there, she served at other institutions. She was the first holder of the Willa B. Player Chair in the Humanities at Bennett College and the Eli Lilly Professor in Religion at Berea College. Moreover, Dr Grant completed other visiting professorships, viz., Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton University, Candler School of Theology, Emory College and The Laney Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Emory University, Christian Theological Seminary, United Theological Seminary, New York Theological Seminary, Bennett College, Berea College and Vidyajoyti Institute of Religious Studies in Delhi, India.

Dr Grant's seminal publication "*White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*" (1989) received all-time-best-selling book recognition by Scholars Press. Additionally, she is the editor of *Perspectives on Womanist Theology* (1995) and co-editor (with Dr Randall C. Bailey) of *The Recovery of Black Presence, An Interdisciplinary Exploration: Essays in Honor of Dr Charles C.opher* (1995). She is the author of many articles including what Gayraud Wilmore identified as the 'groundbreaking,' "*Black Theology and the Black Woman*" (1979).

Dr Grant founded the Center for Black Women in Church and Society (BWCS) at the ITC in 1981 where she served as director. As noted on ITC's website, as the founder of the Center for BWCS, she brought together "interdenominational, intergenerational, interdisciplinary and international groups of women in dialogues, seminars, forums and conferences and classes, setting Black women's agenda in the church and society."

Moreover, through this Center, Dr Grant created mentoring, community/social service, research, leadership and scholarly development and enhancement programs for women, namely, the Womanist Scholars Program (WSP) that supports the sabbatical/research/writing work of black women scholars nationally/internationally and the black Women's Leadership Programs that provide leadership training/education for Black women in the practice of ministry.

Ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1974 and 1976, Dr Grant is an Itinerant Elder. She has served as an assistant minister at Allen AME Church in Jamaica, New York. After moving to Atlanta, she served as assistant minister at Flipper Temple AME Church (her Atlanta home church) and at Victory AME Church, First AME Church and Cosmopolitan AME Church.

Additionally Dr Grant founded the group which developed the Women in Ministry organisation (AME/WIM) which led to the creation of the Commission on Women in Ministry, an official, professional organ in the AME Church. Among other services, AME/WIM provided advocacy work leading to the increased numbers of women pastors and presiding elders (mid-administrators) being appointed by Bishops; its advocacy work also brought forth the election of women General Officers (program heads) and Bishops. Dr Grant has worked with the World Council of Churches (WCC), the National Council of Churches (NCC), the Commission on Church Union (COCU), Partners in Ecumenism (PIE) and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). She holds membership with the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of the Study of Black Religion (SSBR). As well, she currently serves as a consultant with the executive board of the AME/WIM.

Some of Dr Grant's accolades include appearing in *Who's Who Among African-Americans*, *Who's Who Among Young Americans* and *Outstanding Young Women of America*. She received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Ministry Award from Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary, Rochester, New York and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence from Drew University. She appears in the *Archival Project*, *The History Makers*, the *Smithsonian Institute's Postal Exhibit*, 'Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds' and she was a nominee in Johnson Publishing Company's 'National Black Achievement Award' in Religion. Her work has been recognised in several popular magazines, including seven editions of *Ebony Magazine*. She also appeared on a forum on the State of the Black Church (Role of the Church in Black America) sponsored by Tavis Smiley Presents which aired on C-SPAN in 2003.

Dr Grant has travelled extensively, both domestically and internationally, to preach, teach and lead advocacy efforts. She has visited more than 35 countries across six continents. Dr Jacquelyn Grant was married to the late Rev. John W. P. Collier Jr. who served as the Executive Secretary for the Department of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Liberation for ALL but Especially Black Women: The Scholarly Contributions of Jacquelyn Grant

Outstanding Citation:

It is only when Black women and men share jointly the leadership in theology and in the church and the community that the Black nation will become strong and liberated. Only then will there be the possibility that Black Theology can become a theology of divine liberation (Grant 2004, 431).

Dr Jacquelyn Grant is one of the founding developers/scholars of womanist theology. Her work probes questions around gender, race/ethnicity and class in theological discourse/studies, critiques patriarchy and white theology as the norm

in theological studies and analyses the role of black women in the Church and society in general and in the Black Church, religion and society, in particular. Dr Grant notes that there has always been a distinction between the concerns of black women and the concerns of others, namely white women, white men and black men as it relates to theological development and other movements (i.e., suffrage, women's, civil rights movements, etc.). Through her scholarship, teaching, preaching and advocacy work, Dr Grant problematises and challenges traditional, dominant, Western, European, American, white, black male and feminist understandings of God and Christ. Furthermore, Grant illustrates how the experiences of black women call into question certain assumptions in liberation theology in general and Black Theology, in particular (Grant 2004, 421).

Noting the invisibility of black women in Black Theology, Grant maintains that Black Theology must function in the secular community in the same way as it should function in the church community (Grant 2004, 428). Perhaps one of her most concise charges to Black Theologians can be found in a concluding statement in "Black Theology and the Black Woman":

My central argument is this: Black Theology cannot continue to treat Black women as if they were invisible creatures who are on the outside looking into the Black experience, the Black Church and the Black theological enterprise. It will have to deal with the community of believers in all aspects as integral parts of the whole community. Black Theology, therefore, must speak to the bishops who hide behind the statement "Women don't want women pastors." It must speak to the pastors who say,

"My church isn't ready for women preachers yet." It must teach the seminarians who feel that "women have no place in the seminary." It must address the women in the church and community who are content and complacent with their own oppression. It must challenge the educators who would re-educate the people on every issue except the issue of the dignity and equality of women (430).

Dr Grant's seminal work, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* specifically charts the developments and challenges of feminist Christology which, she notes, reflect the experiences of white women predominantly. Grant argues that feminists failed to propose Christological models that speak to the concerns of non-white and non-western women, namely black women. She advances a Womanist Theology with special reference to Christology which begins with the experiences of black women as a point of departure and acknowledges how black women have been oppressed in the church and in the larger society (Grant 1989, 205).

Grant asserts that black women must do theology out of their tri-dimensional experiences of racism, sexism and classism. To ignore any aspect of this experience is to deny the holistic and integrated reality of black womanhood (Grant 1989, 209). To Grant, for liberation to become a reality, race, sex and class must be deliberately confronted. She maintains that as interconnected as they are, they all

impinge greatly on the lives of black women ('Womanist Theology,' 224). She further argues that for liberation theology to be faithful to itself, it must hear the critique coming to it from the perspective of the black woman—perhaps the most oppressed of all the oppressed (Grant 1989, 421).

Presenting the significance of Jesus in the Womanist Tradition, Grant writes,

To affirm Jesus' solidarity with the 'least of the people' is not an exercise in romanticised contentment with one's oppressed status in life. For as the Resurrection signified that there is more to life than the cross for Jesus Christ, for Black women, it signifies that their tri-dimensional oppressive existence is not the end but merely represents the context in which a particular people struggle to experience hope and liberation. Jesus Christ therefore represents a three-fold significance: First, he identifies with the 'little people,' Black women, where they are; secondly, he affirms the basic humanity of these, 'the least'; and thirdly, he inspires active hope in the struggle for the resurrected, liberated existence (Grant 1989, 217),

Grant raises theological questions out of her own experiences thereby contextualising Christology. She asserts as follows

Black women's experience must be affirmed as the crucible for doing women's theology. It is the context in which we must decide on theological questions. More specifically, it is within the context of this experience that Black women read the Bible (Grant 1989, 215). To do womanist theology, then, we must read and hear the Bible and engage it within the context of our own experience (Grant 1989, 217).

Dr Grant further critiques the Church, Academy and Society on their widespread and historical degradation, subordination, marginalisation and abuse (spiritual, physical, psychological, sexual) of Black women. One theological challenge she raises that deleteriously impacts Black women is the notion of servanthood. She asks, "How can one justify calling people to a life of service when they have been compelled to perform the most demeaning forms of service?" (Grant 1993, 209).

Grant argues that black women must refrain from and reframe the traditional notion of servanthood that is exploitative and oppressive and leads to destructive subjugation (Grant 1993, 204; 213). She maintains that black women must envision themselves as servants of Christ not as servants of white society, as has been asserted by white patriarchs. She further illuminates the contradictory appropriation of servanthood in ecclesial contexts wherein ecclesiastical leaders who claim to be servants are generally white middle-class males of the dominant culture while the church has "undergirded much of the human structures causing pain and suffering for many oppressed peoples" (Grant 1993, 201).

Dr Grant argues that these practices constitute sin.

Moreover, Grant contends that African American women have been the servants of servants. She notes that black people particularly were viewed as inferior beings meant for servanthood evidenced by their enslavement. But even after enslavement, the trope of servanthood persisted with brutality and oppression of especially black

women in all spheres of life because of their intersecting gender, racial and class embodiments of identity ('Sin of Servanthood,' 200). Reframing servanthood, she argues that essential tenets of servanthood should include combating oppression, challenging traditional notions of servanthood (steeped in white supremacy) and embracing more liberating understandings of oneself (Grant 1993, 213).

Finally, another significant quote from Grant is:

When Black women say that God is on the side of the oppressed, we mean that God is in solidarity with the struggles of those on the underside of humanity, those whose lives are bent and broken from the many levels of assault perpetrated against them (Grant 1989, 214).

As evidenced in the preceding quote, Dr Jacquelyn Grant's scholarship and life's work in and beyond the Academy include standing in solidarity with those on the underside of humanity and leading/participating in the fight for equality and liberation of women. Her work has advanced the fields of Black Theology, Womanist Theology, Liberation Theology, Ethics, Women's and Gender Studies, Black Church Studies and countless others.

Jacquelyn Grant's Contributions to the Circle

Dr Grant's work with African women theologians began in 1976 at the second meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theological (EATWOT) in Accra, Ghana. A group of African women in attendance at this conference met to discuss issues pertinent to African women and the society, the church, religion and spirituality. Much of the discussion centred around the relevance or non-relevance of Western feminism to African women's reality. After differentiating themselves, African women began to identify their own issues. Their issues included concerns of colonialism/imperialism upon Africans in general and equality issues with African men (sexism). Since 1976, African women continued in their conversations and organising, as women in other Third World contexts began doing the same. Dr Grant encountered some of the same women and others in her work with the World Council of Churches (WCC). She served on two commissions—Faith and Order and World Missions and Evangelism. Women, in all of these contexts, are organised as international/intercontinental bodies and as national and continental bodies as well. African women from these and other experiences came together in the organising of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Dr Grant was amongst the first women who gathered at the founding of the Circle in 1989.

The Circle, is a collaboration between continental and diasporic African women to promote theologies that transform gender inequality in the Church, academy and society. This is work that Grant started in the U.S. context above and expanded across the globe. A crucial aim of the Circle was to critique, challenge and expand liberation theologies that were heavily patriarchal and ignored or minimised the plight of African and African diasporic girls and women. Grant highlights that

the women of the Circle were even able to offer internal critiques of African women's relationship with women employed in their homes (classism). The sisters of the Circle continue to challenge and expand these theologies discursively to amplify Pan-African and Interreligious theological perspectives that create more equitable, just and sustainable futures for African and African diasporic girls and women specifically but for all of creation more generally. Grant's collaboration with sisters across the globe, within the Circle and beyond, has systematically and expansively affected and enhanced the Church's universal and society at large. Through this collaboration, the Circle has been drawn wider, making room for others to collaborate in this affirming, critical and liberating work.

Some of her works include:

Bibliography

- African Methodist Episcopal Church Women in Ministry. Accessed June 24, 2023. <https://amewim.org>.
- Grant, J. "Black Theology and the Black Woman." In *The Black Studies Reader, Special Edition*, edited by Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, and Claudine Michel, 421–434. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- . "The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship." In *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, edited by Emilie M. Townes, 199–218. New York: Orbis Books, 1993.
- . *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- . "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Religious Experience as a Source for Doing Theology." In *African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, edited by Gayraud S. Wilmore, 208–227. Durham: Duke University Press, 1989.
- Interdenominational Theological Center. "Dr Jacquelyn Grant." Faculty Profile. Accessed June 24, 2023. <https://www.itc.edu/directory/dr-jacquelyn-grant/>.
- "The Challenge of the Darker Sister." In *Feminism and Theology*, edited by Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- The History Makers. "Reverend Dr Jacquelyn Grant." Accessed June 24, 2023. <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-dr-jacquelyn-grant>.
- "Womanist Jesus and the Mutual Struggle for Liberation." In *The Recovery of Black Presence, An Interdisciplinary Exploration: Essays in Honor of Dr Charles B. Copher*, edited by Jacquelyn Grant and Randall C. Bailey. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Chapter 66

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE AND ECUMENICAL THEOLOGIES OF REV. VERNA CASSELLS

Nicole Ashwood

Introduction

An ardent, life-long member of the Girls' Brigade, the diminutive Rev. Verna Cassells epitomises of hospitality and grace; someone who believes in engendering direct person-to-person relationships wherever she goes. Wreathed in smiles and seeming wiser than the Jamaican hills from whence she hails, while looking young at heart, one might not guess that Rev. Verna was one of those who gathered for that inaugural Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Accra (the Circle), Ghana over 30 years ago. An educator, missiologist, ecumenist, passionate performer and storyteller, Verna continues to be engaged in transformational theology as a member of the pastoral support team (and as a preaching elder) having formally retired from active ministry in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. This reflection on Rev. Verna Cassells is garnered from an interview with her in April 2022.

Who is Rev. Verna Cassells?

Born in Jericho, Hanover in Jamaica, Verna Cassells epitomises the phrase 'likkl but tallawah' (small but full of impact). Like many children in families committed to church life and pastoral support, Verna was actively involved with ministry as a young girl. She was engaged in "Sunday school and the youth fellowship and the rallies" and, of course, her ongoing passion—Girls' Brigades, which she describes as "a major influence for me" (Cassell 2022).

It was through her involvement with the Girls' Brigade company in Cornwall County at Cambria Memorial, that Verna met one of her first mentors, Ms Norma Smellie.

Deaconess Smellie was the preacher at the new company's installation service and extended an invitation to the annual United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman's (now United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands) youth camp

held at Clarendon College. During one of the United Church camps in 1972, Verna accepted the call to ministry under the leadership of Rev. Raymond Coke and his wife, Mrs Ruth Coke who were the camp parents. Despite accepting God's call to ministry, Verna opted to spend a year in the classroom as a teacher at Mt. Alvernia, one of the island's esteemed Catholic Girls Schools in Western Jamaica. In that gap year, Verna was again actively engaged in supporting her adopted 'home' congregation, St Paul's, Montego Bay through mentorship and informal support of the youth ministry. In 1973, Verna began her formal theological training at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTC) with fellow United Church local youths, including Roderick Hewitt and Gordon Evans.

As Youth Minister, part of her portfolio included preparation of the Day of Fellowship activities for Ash Wednesday. This was often met with mixed feelings, as it was not unusual for individuals to register their discomfiture with the way the competitions and talent-ingathering events were managed. Additionally, there were those people who did not enjoy forfeiting their 'holiday' for the rigours of an all-day church celebration. However, there were also rewarding moments. One year remains etched in Rev. Cassells' memory.

I recall on one occasion when, at the end of the day [of Fellowship], things went well and we finished on time and personas got their prizes and people were pleased and everything and I said to myself, 'Lord, lettest now that servant depart in peace' because of the success we had. That one was a high point [in my ministry].ⁱ

Theology and Culture Debate: Dawning Awareness of Post-Colonial Thought

Although she was part of the first batches of post-colonial learning—non-European ministers were not overly common—Verna was not very conscious of decolonising discourse. That is until she was confronted with subtle nuances of racism during her interview for her first placement as a youth minister. The Irish pastor responsible for her placement was very quick to point out that it was imperative for Verna to continue 'exactly' in the way her predecessor, a white woman, had operated. Before Verna could consider being taken aback (and as a then 'good' colonial subject, she might not have), her spiritual father interjected, "fair enough. Now, Verna, you listen to me. When you go in, be the best you that you can be! Don't be anybody else" (Cassells 2022).

That was the impetus and affirmation that she needed. She found her niche in Christian Education and Youth Ministry, made her mark and never once allowed herself to be a caricature of anyone else. Ironically, although she heeded Rev. Redway's admonishing encouragement and despite being quite involved in performative elements of Jamaican culture, Rev. Cassell still had not grasped what postcolonial theological discourse entailed. She recalls,

Louise Bennett's work in relation to the culture in relation to the dialect was something that was a part of me. And I would use the dialect, to begin with, when I entered the festival competition years before when I was a [secondary school] student. And so, I continued to look at her work after UTC—though at UTC I would do dialects and poetry, because, of course, you know I did a lot of speaking. (Cassells 2022).

The speaking to which Verna refers includes representation of the denomination and her beloved Girls' Brigades at regional and global events. A visit to Scotland proved instructive on cultural belongingness and postcolonial thought as she was asked about Bob Marley, Jamaica's cultural icon and ambassador, upon arrival. Unfortunately, in that era, a good Christian was not familiar with the works of Marley or any local artiste of the day and so, Verna was unable to respond articulately. She met with a similar challenge at the airport in Ghana when attending the inaugural Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians gathering, where she was asked about Marcus Garvey, one of Jamaica's National Heroes. Verna very quickly surmised that the Ghanaian customs officers were more educated about Garvey than she was. Determined that each time she received such exposure, she would prepare herself by researching persons such as Garvey, Marley and Bennett who had been established as Jamaican cultural icons in the international arena.

Ironically, Verna experienced another 'culture shock' when confronted by the gender stereotypes perpetuated in Ghana at the time. Although not a nun, Rev. Cassells has taken a vow of celibacy, having determined not to marry. She was quite comfortable with the decision (and still is, to this day) and enjoyed the acceptance and 'endorsement' of her local church regarding her decision. Yet, to her surprise and dismay, she faced criticism from both women and men who berated her for being unmarried while in ministry. She was even charged with being 'selfish' for choosing singleness, which was like a slap in the face. There she was, participating in a conference intended to 'empower' African women and African women in diaspora while being criticised for her choice of singleness because of cultural perceptions of womanhood! It was a difficult pill to swallow. But also at the time, African women had internalised that marriage was an important aspect of women's life in order to be respected especially for those in the ministry of word and sacrament. Marriage in Africa is a sacred venture and there are rites of passage for that venture to this day. In 1989, when women in the African church were just beginning to find their voice, the belief that a woman needed to be married, especially a pastor who would have to counsel married women and men, was even more pronounced.

Forays into Feminist Thinking

Attending the Circle's inauguration spurred Rev. Cassell's thinking about feminism and the role of women in the church. She had in fact been exposed to feminist

thought in the Caribbean, having interacted with the works of Dr Leith Dunn and others. Verna reminisces,

When I landed in the Circle there in Ghana, one of the major introductions for me both women in theology and especially gender issues began before that time. When I was youth director for the United Church, I was involved in the Caribbean youth ministry through the Caribbean Conference of Churches and Leith Dunn was the person responsible for that program. She was the person who initiated me into gender issues, I remember when we were in Trinidad and I was introduced to it (Cassells 2022).

Thus, though confident that she had feminist thought covered—after all, she was from a very progressive denomination, one that ordained women—Rev. Verna would discover that she was not as *au fait* with the feminist theological argument as she thought. She was a woman operating in what is often perceived as a man's world. Fortunately, she had the commendable support of her church. However, there was more for Verna to learn; not only at the feet of those women mentors she met in Ghana during the inaugural of the Circle but also in other missional forays with other mentors.

Hence, during her postgraduate studies in Missiology as a foreigner in South Korea, the young theologian was challenged to rethink what she thought she knew. In a conversation with Rev. Dr Kim Yong Bok, of blessed memory, Verna posited the view that women enjoyed equal status in the church as men. Yong Bok invited her to examine whether women were in the top tier of leadership in the church. She realised that although women were being ordained in her local denomination, there was a gross disparity between women in top leadership and those in the pews. Verna was obliged to do more than just 'enjoy' her status as a woman in ministry; she committed to mentoring and supporting women in ministry.

Missiologist and Lecturer

Verna's commitment underscores the ethos of the Circle. For, although the Circle encourages academic rigour, its ethos remains focused on support, mentoring and exposure for women of African descent. Verna started moving toward the praxis of theology that embraced open doors for the marginalised and oppressed, in a mission programme that encouraged South-South mission support in spaces where it was often felt that mission was only North-South. This radical reciprocal model was fostered by the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) for which Rev. Verna Cassells was the Education in Mission Secretary. Her work at CANACOM afforded her as a missiologist to open doors to mentoring and support, especially with women and youth living and working within the Caribbean region. Using the platforms available through the Joint Mission in Action Teams and the Young Adults in Mission Work camps, Verna assisted several youths to discern and unearth their vocational call.

Youth ministry is her passion so it may be natural that Rev. Cassells was actively engaged in the shaping of young minds in those short-term programmes established by CANACOM. This was only one aspect of the com-powering initiatives adopted by Rev. Cassells as she also strongly advocated for CANACOM's support of Guyana's theological programme, which offered a base for local training of lay and ordained persons among the reformed churches in Guyana. Through this programme, which afforded participants the opportunity to retain full-time employment while studying part-time, several women responded to the call to ministry, a number of whom have subsequently been ordained.

Having completed two terms at CANACOM, Verna's announcement to leave was made public at a United Church Synod in the early 2000s. Verna mentored one minister to take her position as she moved on to engage on a different level. A teacher at heart and blessed with a teacher's passion for fostering new ways of thinking, it is no wonder that Rev. Verna Cassells found her way back to the 'Holy Woods', her alma mater—UTC. There, she combined all her passions in her role as a Christian Education lecturer, a post traditionally maintained by the United Church lecturer on staff. Verna was right where she wanted to be and legitimately there—not just filling a gap, as she had done before in a temporary assignment with no benefits. Her experience was bittersweet, as she landed at UTC in a roundabout way. She candidly reflects:

What I'm saying is that when you're being used, you need to be aware, you need to speak up and, at the same time, you need to be assured—to know that somehow it will work ... as it did for me.

Although this referred to that particular incident in her life and ministry, her comment is so telling for many who have managed to survive systemic oppression, opposition and exclusion (ousting) in the church. As a colleague, working alongside strong womanist (Nannyishⁱⁱ) theologians such as Rev. Dr Hyacinth Boothe, the first 'native' Methodist woman to be ordained in Jamaica, Verna was not unaware of the micro-aggressions that played out in the patriarchal spaces. Many might have seen it otherwise but Verna recalls,

Dr Boothe, Hyacinth Boothe, was responsible for a program (on feminist theology). Third, a level three program on women and theology, which she did for a number of years and when I came in, we shared in that program. One of the things that I noticed over the years was that this particular course was usually scheduled alongside other courses that were required courses; so, you had a few people doing those courses and sometimes nobody. The last time it was done, it was done by one person and it was done as a reading course because the warden made a particular request for that person ... but I must say, there were other people who wanted to do it but because of the required class courses which they had to do they weren't able to: To do that course (Cassells 2022).

One might see this as reading discrimination into a situation but when an elective is consistently scheduled at the same time as a core/foundation course (which was

likely to make some uncomfortable and critique establishment), there are sufficient grounds for a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Contribution to the Christ and Culture Theological ‘Debate’

Verna’s core focus was Christian Education and she infused her lectures with the wisdom gleaned over the years from her mentors, alongside the theories needed for enabling the students to be better practical theologians. There were again systemic challenges for Verna in how the biblical text was presented and subsequently interpreted. She noted that inclusive language was not incorporated into religious discourse of Caribbean Christian Education. This was not inclusivity in relation to gendered terminology but the unwillingness to be open to the use of ‘the vernacular’ in ministry.

[So] when I came into UTC that third time ... I looked at the language that was used in the language for Christian Education. It had over the years, been just talking about the English and using the English for Church School work and Christian Education and everything else but not looking at the Jamaican now. And so, we [sought to include] ... that aspect, the culture, the language, the context of the people, because here we are doing Christian Education [in post-independent Caribbean] and using the colonial language as the language of instruction and praxis (Cassells 2022).

Although Rev. Cassells does not see herself as being part of the decades-old Gospel and Cultureⁱⁱⁱ debate, she undoubtedly epitomised this in her work at UTC. This was possibly influenced by the impact of her mentor, Joyce Bailey, who was the first organiser-coordinator of the Caribbean Living Series, *Fashion Me A People*.^{iv} Joyce facilitated writers’ workshops, pulling together ecumenical thought from the region. Having already been gifted with a regional network from her prior roles as Youth Ministry Coordinator and CANACOM Education in Mission Secretary and recalling her cultural inexperience in Ghana and South Korea, Verna sought to ensure that her protégés were equipped with regional tools for ministry. She partnered with the Baptist Bible Society publishing house to ensure that the materials being introduced were regionally appropriate and contextually relevant. Representatives were often invited to share with the theologians, offering a perspective from the publication that helped the students think critically about Christian Education and formation. And, when the Jamaica Patwa Bible project was introduced, Rev. Cassells was a chief collaborator, helping Wycliffe Bible Society (who had taken the project from the Bible Society of the West Indies) to explore ways in which the church could best support the use of *Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testament* (the Jamaican New Testament). In her own inimical way, she included aspects of this in the Christian Education course and her decision was affirmed by her colleague, who included it in the curriculum.

Additionally, Verna found that informal spaces afforded greater openness to the issues at hand. In fact, it was in those spaces that she challenged the use of patriarchal language, of which, vestiges remain in the Caribbean. And, reverting

to her work with the cultural icons, she has also challenged the stereotypes that portray women in negative ways. One such example is the analysis of folk songs in augmenting or countering the negative portrayal of women. For example, she cites Louise Bennett's response to the folk song 'Woman a Habby load' (women are heavy burdens); where Bennett retorts humorously yet unequivocally, "Ooman a bread winna, ooman a stamina ooman tallawah, ooman a man-mumma."^v

Over time, Verna saw hostility and apathy against feminist-womanist-Nannyish discourse, moved toward growing acceptance of 'inclusive' language. She celebrates that more and more, the language used in church includes sisters and brothers, instead of brethren or brothers.

Ministry of Mentoring

But what of mentoring females while lecturing at UTC, one might ask? She has never stopped mentoring. This was facilitated informally through counselling sessions and general interactions with students. Verna believes in supporting women and creating spaces for women to be there for each other as needed. And, as she saw the young theologians as future colleagues, she was open to investing in them within and outside of the classroom. She remains connected with several of her mentees and makes herself available to them via social media and other spaces as needed. One of her students is a regular conversation partner, as she is an Anglican minister in the community where Verna resides.

Having retired from active formal ministry, Rev. Verna Cassells continues to avail herself in her home context, as part of the pastoral support team in Jericho. She also celebrates that her ministry of mentoring to both males and females is about mutuality and engagement. Verna notes that at a recent graduation of lay pastors at the United Church, several of those involved in the graduation exercise—women and men—who hold prominent positions in the local and denominational context, were included in her sphere of influence at some point and now provide theological insights for her.

She regrets that,

Very often we limit ministry to ordained Ministry, when we need to encourage the other Christians that each member of the church to recognise the role that they can play in ministry in the Church, so when we are talking about evangelism [and mentoring], we need to look at it in its broadest perspective (Cassells 2022).

This fuels her current work with young Brigaders and is a testimony to her conviction. Having assisted in the restoration of the company at her home church, she provides mentorship to both the children and their parents. She is excited that the girls, whose ages range between four and twelve, are the ones planning and forecasting the programmes. For Verna, this is where her youthfulness resides—in mentoring and nurturing those whose gifts need a little nudge to be unearthed.

Conclusion

Within the Jamaican culture, after one has visited with friends, it is not uncommon to offer one ‘last lick’ (a parting shot, friendly gesture or slap that prolongs the parting until someone finally calls it a day). Verna reminds the world, that mentoring is about influence, influencing the people who will later influence others. She is buoyed by her reconnecting with Mercy Amba Oduyoye in Jamaica, during the World Council of Churches’ International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, as it kindled memories of that first Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians’ meeting. And Verna’s parting shot, let’s keep in touch, continue to influence the influencers and remember prejudices come from our responses to the ways we have been socialised. She likkl but she tallawah yeah! We salute and celebrate Rev. Verna Cassells.

Notes

1. Circle Cassells 2022.
2. A term coined by Rev. Dr Marjorie Lewis and Dr Evie Vernon to describe the brand of feminist approaches to Caribbean, more so Jamaican, theology. It derives from the understanding that not all feminist or womanist theological thought is the same, and while Caribbean thought is an amalgam of North American and European feminism, it also affirms the praxis and theories carried through the ages from women’s wisdom; the mothers and grandmothers. This is embodied in the persona of ‘Nanny of the Maroons’ a fierce, determined woman who led her people to repeatedly overthrow the British during the first centuries of African enslavement in Jamaica. (See also “Diaspora Dialogue: Womanist Theology in Engagement With Some Aspects of the Black British and Jamaican Experience,” in Anthony Reddie (Ed.) *Black Theology an International Journal* Volume 2 Number 1 January 2004 (London Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2003) pp. 85 – 109)
3. H Richard Niebhur’s magnum opus *Christ and Culture*, is considered one of the most significant theological and missiological works of the 20th century, which sought to name the methods of Christianity’s response to (their own) culture throughout history. Niebhur’s thesis posits that Christianity either places Christ against, in (of), or above Culture. The work has fuelled several debates, but ultimately remains part of the theory that impacts one’s engagement with missiology, Christology and Christian Education in post-colonial contexts.
4. Published through the Caribbean Conference of Churches in the 1980s.
5. See <https://youtu.be/QYBS9Oqa3GU> - 44:16 - 47:36 for the longer version of Bennett’s thesis.

Bibliography

Cassells, Verna. Interview by Nicole Ashwood. April 2022.

PART VI

**CENTRAL AFRICAN FOUNDING MOTHERS
OF THE CIRCLE**

Chapter 67

SISTER BERNADETTE MBUY-BEYA: A WOMAN OF FAITH

Marthe Maleke Kondemo

Introduction

This piece aims to honour and celebrate the life and contribution of Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, one of the founding members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. It explores her journey through various contributions in the domain of research and publications. Sister Bernadette Mbuy-Beya was one of the Congolese female theologians present at the 1989 Circle Pan African Conference in Ghana. She promoted the Circle throughout her career. Mbuy-Beya was an Ursuline sister, a mother superior of a small community of five in Lubumbashi in DRC. She undertook her tertiary training at Lumen Vitae, Institut des Sciences Religieuses in Brussels. Mbuy-Beya was an important member of the Catholic and francophone Circle. She was one of the Circle coordinators for francophone Africa. She has held several positions including mother Superior of the Ursuline Sisters and Director of the Institut Supérieur des Sciences Religieuses of Lubumbashi. She died on Tuesday, 16 March 2022, a day after I received her phone number and sent her a message. The message was meant to inform and explain the matriarch project and a request for an interview. Mbuy-Beya has contributed to the advancement and the success of the Circle in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Life and Legacy of Bernadette Mbuy-Beya

Mbuy-Beya's impact transcends her immediate context, resonating not only within Congolese society but across the broader African landscape. Through her courageous actions, she has established a lasting legacy, inspiring women to assert themselves boldly and confront various forms of oppression while advocating for a decolonised theological framework. She navigated and challenged entrenched norms and customs that relegated women to subordinate roles vis-à-vis men, thereby paving the way for gender equality and empowerment. Despite lamenting the lack of female representation within her church, Mbuy-Beya refused to acquiesce to

this status quo. Instead, she dedicated herself to rigorous research and prolific publication endeavours, shedding light on societal and ecclesiastical injustices. In doing so, she emerged as a resounding voice for women whose perspectives were often overlooked or marginalised.

As argued by Monohan (2004, 2), the women of the Circle seek to have their voices heard and assert their discernment of God's will. Members of the Circle assess their experience of culture, religion, biblical interpretation and social responsibility from a faith perspective. They speak of their frustration in encounters with Western misinterpretation, negligence and ignorance of the African female experience. Mbuy-Beya brought classic concerns of European missionary sisters to her work in Lubumbashi (Pemberton 2003, 100). Mbuy-Beya was actively engaged in the struggle for life on the continent. According to Mbuy-beya, the African continent cannot receive the hope of Jesus Christ without the complete liberation of women, in society and church. She believed that women have a unique contribution to make within the Church and society and nominate the supreme work of woman as that "of mother, giving and bearing life" (Mbuy-Beya 1996, 186).

Mbuy-Beya insisted that the first step for any theological engagement with African women is to take proper account of their incessant struggle for the necessities of daily life, for food, shelter, work and health. They are the ones who nurture the life of the community in the shadow of men, in the constant presence of violence.

Bernadette Mbuy-Beya Contributions

Mbuy-Beya's theological contribution majors in issues of education, health, prayers and resistance to violence against women and children. Mbuy-Beya committed herself to education and she encouraged church and religious congregations to provide adequate theological training for girls and their own sisters. Fathers were requested to educate their daughters as well as their sons and to work against the practice of men marrying illiterate women to facilitate their domination (Mbuy-Beya 1986, 185). The liturgical and catechetical work of women in her view, are strategically important in the growth of the church, the sustenance of Christian education and the renewal of society (2003, 101). She considered women training to handle theological ideas and the centrality of a contextual and communal theology as an indispensable part of her vision of life for the continent (2003, 104). In her discourses, Mbuy-Beya advocates for contextual theology, asserting that theological discourse should authentically mirror the lived experiences of individuals. She posits that true theologising encompasses an approach accessible to all, irrespective of academic qualifications, emphasising the importance of both formal and informal education in theological engagement. Mbuy-Beya underscores the necessity for clarity in theological discourse to facilitate mutual understanding between all parties involved (Mbuy-Beya, 1996b).

Health

Mbuy-Beya's concern for health and education is the perpetual underlay of all her theological work. Whether she addresses the misconceived population control of the United Nations' initiatives, the threat posited by HIV, sexually transmitted diseases or sickle cell anaemia, her voice in the Circle was one whose model of ministry is in clear continuity with those of the European sisters who founded the mission. Engaging on the issues of human sexuality, marriage and prostitution, Mbuy-Beya argued that, in African cultures, issues pertaining to human sexuality have been regarded as matters belonging to the private sphere of the home. In patriarchal cultures, as one could expect, if such matters are discussed, particularly in heterosexual contexts, the preoccupation is on how males can benefit. Sexuality has cultural, economic and psychological implications in women's lives especially the unmarried ones. The control of women's sexuality, sanctioned by not only the African cultures and patriarchy as espoused by the broader society and the media but also by women's unfriendly biblical interpretations, continues to be the order of the day (Mbuy-Beya 2006).

Women in the Church

Mbuy-Beya argued that, the church is at a point of renewal and the language of charismatic opportunity and change permeates her writing (Mbuy-Beya 1996, 186).

It was her regret that her church had failed to give women a voice. According to Pemberton (2003, 100), Mbuy-Beya was urgent and persistent in her call for the male distribution of power within the Church to be re-examined in the light of Scripture. Equality is found in the spiritual power and ministry that are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women with no privilege of gender, which therefore should not be privileged within the life of the Church (Pemberton 2003, 105). However, Mbuy-Beya believed that women have a responsibility to fight for their liberation in society and their proper recognition within the structures of the Church (Mbuy-Beya 1996a, 185.). The insidious cultural difficulty of silenced women and the silence surrounding the brutality of their lives must be overcome by women themselves (Mbuy-Beya 1996a, 186).

Their theology should be one of passion, *fondée sur le savoir mais aussi sur le sentiment, sur la science mais aussi sur la sagesse, une théologie qui se fait non seulement dans la tête mais aussi dans le cœur, le corps, le ventre*ⁱ

Mbuy-Beya argues that the fight for the liberation of women must be based, in a great inner freedom acquired through prayer and a spirit of sacrifice, in a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Mbuy-Beya 1996a, 185).

The Church's doctrinal instruction ought to consistently uphold the dignity of humanity, a principle that remains central across her written works and exchanges informed by scriptural analysis and post-conciliar encyclicals. Mbuy-Beya recalls the Church to the divine will of mutual dignity between men and women

(Pemberton 2003, 100). Her own life and that of her community was based on a deed of “intimacy with Jesus” (Pemberton 2003, 107).

In her contemplation of African cultural hermeneutics within the framework of liberating theology through inculturation, Bernadette Mbuy-Beya asserts that the transformative potential of inculturation theology in aligning cultures with the message of Jesus Christ cannot be fully realised without acknowledging and integrating the contributions of women. She maintains that genuine transformation is inseparable from the essence of Jesus Christ, who embodies “the way, the truth and the life” (Mbuy-Beya, 1992, 186–87).

Conclusion

Mbuy-Beya stands as a prominent figure among the matriarchs of the DRC Circle, with her written legacy serving as a testament to her significant contributions. Through various publications, she actively championed the cause of women’s liberation and empowerment, challenging traditional gender roles such as those related to childbearing and domestic duties. Mbuy-Beya articulated a vision wherein African women, could assert themselves and overcome violence, oppression and subjugation, particularly through financial independence and participation in decision-making processes.

Mbuy-Beya played a pivotal role in the inception and growth of the Circle which is underscored by Mercy Amba Oduyoye’s tribute following her passing. Oduyoye’s recollection of Mbuy-Beya’s involvement in the early stages of the Circle’s formation highlights her determination and willingness to engage in discussions on sensitive topics, despite initial reservations. Mbuy-Beya’s proactive approach extended to establishing associations to address pertinent issues, further demonstrating her commitment to women’s empowerment.

In summary, Sister Bernadette Mbuy-Beya’s enduring legacy lies not only in her written works but also in her instrumental role in shaping the trajectory of the Circle and advancing the cause of women’s empowerment in the DRC and beyond.

Notes

- i. Passion, based on knowledge but also on feeling, on science but also on wisdom, a theology that is made not only in the head but also in the heart, the body, the stomach.

Bibliography

- Mbuy-Beya, B. “African Spirituality: A Cry of Life.” In *Spirituality of the Third World: A Cry for Life: Papers and Reflections from the Third General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, January 1992, Nairobi, Kenya*, edited by K.C. Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, 1-20. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Mbuy-Beya, B. “Human Sexuality, Marriage and Prostitution.” In *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro, 155-179. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

- Mbuy-Beya, B. "Stand Up and Walk, Daughter of My People: Consecrated Sisters of the Circle." In *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 123-140. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Mbuy-Beya, B. *Woman, Who Are You? A Challenge*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998.
- Mbuy-Beya, B. "Women in the Churches in Africa: Possibilities for Presence and Promises." In *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, edited by M. Browne, 175-187. New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Mbuy-Beya, B. "Women in the Church in Africa: Possibilities for Presence and Promises." In *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women*, edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, 215-230. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001.
- Monohan, B.M. "Writing, Sharing, Doing: The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians." PhD diss., Boston College, 2004. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/151480967.pdf>.
- Oduyoye, M.A. "Message of Condolences on the Passing of Sister Bernadette Mbuy-Beya." March 19, 2022.
- Pemberton, C. *Circle Thinking: African Women Theologians in Dialogue with the West*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Chapter 68

REVEREND BERTHE NZEBA MWENA KALEN: A LIVING LEGEND

Marthe Maleke Kondemo

Introduction

Bertha Nzeba Mwena Kalen epitomises resilience and leadership as a trailblazer in theological education and church ministry within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Born in 1948, Nzeba shattered barriers by becoming the first Congolese woman to complete theological education in 1976, subsequently becoming the inaugural clergywoman in the Presbyterian Church of the DRC. Her indelible mark on history is further underscored by her pivotal role in establishing the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Ghana in 1989 where she emerged as a vanguard among African women theologians. Since then, Nzeba has held various leadership positions within the church, advocating tirelessly for women's rights and fostering peace and security amidst conflict. Through her multifaceted contributions, Nzeba has become a beacon of empowerment and compassion, leaving an indelible legacy of empowerment and social transformation.

Berthe Nzeba: A Living Legend

Women in church in DRC have not only been delayed in theological training but have long been assimilated into the domains traditionally assigned to them. Berthe Nzeba Mwena Kalen joins the list of many African women who have beaten all odds to become trailblazers in theological education and church leadership. Nzeba was born in 1948. In 1976, she became the first Congolese woman to complete theological education, therefore, becoming the first clergywoman in the Presbyterian Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As such, she goes to the annals of History in DRC as a great icon who opened the way for many women to access theological education and to thrive in church ministry (Mandongo 2023).

Nzeba played a pioneering role among African women theologians in the establishment of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Ghana in 1989. Since then, she has occupied various leadership positions within the church,

including serving as the General Secretary of the Women and Family Department in the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) at the national level, President of the Kinshasa-West Synod within the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa and Manager of Women's Activities. Nzeba's significant contributions extend to initiating and implementing numerous projects and training programmes aimed at advancing women's rights and fostering income-generating activities. Her involvement within the ECC, an umbrella organisation encompassing approximately 95 Protestant denominations, has positioned her as a notable peacemaker.

She has actively collaborated with diverse organisations to address the urgent needs of female survivors of rape amidst the ongoing conflict in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Additionally, Nzeba has been a staunch advocate for peace and security, representing the ECC in various national and international forums. Her commitment is especially evident in her engagement in youth and women's development initiatives, where she has provided training sessions on their rights and roles within the church. Mrs Doris Ngasi Ngiamanda Mandongo, the Provincial Director of the Women and Family Department in the province of Bandundu, lauds Nzeba's unwavering dedication to championing the rights and empowerment of women (Mandongo 2023).

In an interview with Doris Ngasi, she affirms that through the work of Nzeba, "women have become aware of their God-given mission."

Women have resisted structural systems of injustice that have invisibilised and excluded them from such mission by interrogating certain biblical texts that have been used to justify their marginalisation. Nzeba has travelled throughout DRC provinces with the aim of building the capacities of Protestant women to inspire, strengthen and emancipate them to competitively speak out nationally and internationally about gender equality. Thanks to her multiple sacrifices, her hard work has paved the way for women to fight for their recognition within the church and for the maintenance of the structures of the Church for the well-being of all (Mandongo 2023).

The PRENAO orphanage also speaks of Nzeba's actions towards life in abundance for all. These include giving children quality education, providing school supplies, paying for their school fees, food and clothing. She has not only supported orphans but also their host families too with income-generating activities. She has also invested in widows and survivors of sexual abuse by training them in crafts (soap-making and baking), trauma healing and above all, the Word of God. Nzeba has financed the purchase of a plot and the construction of a house for a young girl, who was a victim of rape, with her children and sent many of such children to university. Today, thanks to Reverend Berthe Nzeba, several orphans get an education and have become contributing members of society and a blessing to their families. Nzeba may not have continued to be a Circle member but she carried out works of the Circle and went beyond the call of duty by financing studies for those that were less privileged (Nyirabwisa 2023).

Conclusion

Berthe Nzeba's impact transcends theological realms, extending to tangible actions that uplift communities and individuals in need. Her unwavering commitment to women's rights and empowerment, coupled with her dedication to peacebuilding and social justice, exemplifies the embodiment of servant leadership. From pioneering theological education to spearheading initiatives that empower marginalised groups, Nzeba's legacy serves as a testament to the transformative power of compassion and perseverance. As a living legend, Nzeba's influence continues to reverberate, inspiring generations to strive for equity, justice and the common good.

Bibliography

Mandongo, D.N.N. Interview by Marthe Maleke. 2023.

Nyirabwisa, A. Interview by Marthe Maleke. 2023.

Chapter 69

JEANNETTE MUNDA BADIBANGA: A WISE WOMAN MODELED AFTER ABIGAIL IN 1 SAMUEL 25:32–35

Kavira Nganza

Introduction

This chapter delves into the remarkable achievements of Jeannette Munda Tsh/Badibanga following her participation in the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and her participation in its inaugural conference in Legion, Ghana. Munda's profound impact spans both the ecclesiastical and societal domains, where her active engagement serves as a testament to her pioneering spirit. As a pioneer in her own right, Munda exemplifies a model of inspiration for present and future generations, instilling courage and fostering leadership in women's ministry. Human beings, inherently ordained with a mission to serve both God and humanity, wield immense influence through their actions, shaping societies and imparting invaluable lessons for transformative change. Munda's narrative mirrors that of historical figures like Abigail from 1 Samuel 25, who amidst life's adversities, exhibited unwavering determination, diligence, resilience and ability in the pursuit of their mission and responsibilities. Through an exploration of Munda's journey, this biography sheds light on her indelible contributions to the promotion of peace, equity, justice and reconciliation, solidifying her place among the ranks of unforgettable figures in both contemporary and ancient societies.

The Life of Madame Munda

Born on 27 Jan 1945, Badibanga pursued her education in the humanities in Kananga, Democratic Republic of Congo, completing a six-year programme. Initially, she served as a teacher for four years before transitioning to the role of director at social homes in Kananga and Lubumbashi for the subsequent four years. Later, she assumed the position of manager at the Home of Students at the University of Lubumbashi for a decade. In an era where early marriages often

truncated women's educational pursuits, Badibanga's steadfast commitment to her studies enabled her to undertake significant societal responsibilities. The Interparliamentary Union and the International Labor Organisation (ILO) have highlighted the transformative impact of equal opportunity policies, particularly in facilitating women's entry into the labour market (ILO 2008).

Recognising education as a fundamental prerequisite for women's economic empowerment and societal advancement, Badibanga exhibited resilience in an environment where women faced limited opportunities in decision-making roles. Despite the challenges, Badibanga emerged as one of the few Congolese women theologians to engage in extensive scholarly publications. Her writings, including works such as *"General Polite Rules"* (Badibanga 1991) and *"Hospitality and Organisation of the House."* *"Disobedience: Maina Tells Her Forced Marriage Story"* underscores her commitment to promoting morality and social ethics. Drawing upon biblical principles, Badibanga's publications aimed to cultivate harmonious relationships and inspire individuals to embrace greatness while fostering interpersonal harmony (Grenz 1997, 23).

Badibanga exemplified the concept of living in an era of interculturality through her written works (Badibanga 1991). She emphasised the importance of positive values that contribute to harmonising social life. Additionally, she actively campaigned against gender-based discrimination and advocated for women's rights and improved social conditions. Badibanga's involvement extended to broadcasting as she hosted the programme 'Words of Women' on Radio Elikya, the Kinshasa Catholic radio, where she disseminated essential materials on social values to both young people and adults. Moreover, she served as the president of the association 'Moninga Mwasi,' translating to 'Woman Like Me,' where she oversaw the care of abandoned and marginalised mothers, ensuring they received the dignity and respect often denied to them by society. She also extended her support to elderly women who had been forsaken by their families and society. Drawing parallels to Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:32–35, who was commended by David for her wisdom and courage, Munda demonstrated similar qualities in her approach to working with women and advocating for social equality. Despite facing financial challenges, Munda persistently utilised her personal resources to sustain her social work initiatives, particularly since the association she managed relied solely on members' contributions without external funding. As a result, the dedicated women volunteers within the association tirelessly worked towards promoting the economic independence of women and advancing their collective interests (Grenz 1997).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Badibanga's journey serves as a profound testament to the transformative power of dedication and resilience in the face of societal challenges. Through her active engagement in both ecclesiastical and societal

spheres, Badibanga epitomised the spirit of pioneering leadership, inspiring countless individuals across generations. Her commitment to promoting peace, equity, justice and reconciliation echoes the timeless narratives of historical figures like Abigail from 1 Samuel 25, who exemplified unwavering determination and diligence in fulfilling their missions. Badibanga inspires courage and passion in works of gender equality. Munda seems to have not continued as a member of the Circle but she continued to work for women's emancipation in various ways and therefore the work of the Circle continued through her responsibilities.

Bibliography

Badibanga, J.M. *Good Manners: General Rules of Politeness*. Kinshasa: Pauline, 1991.

Badibanga, J.M. *Good Manners: Knowing How to Speak in Family and in Public*. Kinshasa: Pauline, 1993.

Badibanga, J.M. *Bad About Myself*. Kinshasa: Pauline Publishers, 1999.

Grenz, S.J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

International Labor Organisation. "Women and Work." Reports and Documents, Nos. 55, 158, 2008.

The Holy Bible, King James Version. 1 Samuel 25:32–35

Chapter 70

JOSÉPHINE FARHI CHIBAONZA: PIONEER FULL OF PERSONAL INITIATIVE

Charlotte Umba Yaula

Introduction

Josephine Chibalonza stands as a beacon of proactive leadership and social transformation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Her journey, marked by strategic initiatives and collaborative endeavours, underscores the profound impact of individuals in effecting systemic change within civil registration systems. Serving as a representative of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chibalonza participated in the inaugural pan-African event held in Ghana in 1989, signalling her commitment to continental cooperation and advancement. At the town hall of Lubumbashi, she assumed the role of civil status coordinator where she confronted pressing challenges concerning birth registration. Despite concerted efforts by government agencies and NGOs, birth registration rates remained suboptimal, prompting Chibalonza to pioneer collaborative efforts with hospitals and schools. Through her directives, which mandated birth registration prior to newborn discharge from maternity wards and enrolment in educational institutions, Chibalonza successfully elevated birth registration rates, registering approximately 33 000 births annually. This chapter explores Chibalonza's multifaceted efforts in addressing birth registration challenges and extends to her advocacy for marriage registration within the civil registry, encapsulating the broader societal implications of her transformative initiatives.

Josephine Chibalonza's Life

Chibalonza, serving as a representative of Zaire, which is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), participated in the inaugural pan-African event held in Ghana in 1989. In her professional capacity, she held the position of civil status coordinator at the town hall of Lubumbashi. One of the significant challenges she addressed pertained to the issue of birth registration within the civil status system. In the DRC, the registration of births holds considerable importance, as

it formalises the newborn's identity, citizenship and issuance of a birth certificate. Despite extensive awareness campaigns conducted by government entities and non-governmental organisations like United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), a notable proportion of parents fail to register their children. To tackle this persistent challenge surrounding birth registration, Josephine Farhi Chibalonza initiated collaborative efforts with hospitals and educational institutions. She implemented directives whereby maternity wards were instructed not to discharge newborns until they were registered and nurseries or kindergartens were mandated to enrol only those children who possessed birth certificates.

Chibalonza's proactive approach yielded favourable outcomes with approximately 33 000 births being registered annually under her stewardship. In essence, Chibalonza's strategic interventions effectively addressed the issue of birth registration, highlighting the significance of proactive measures and collaborative partnerships in overcoming systemic challenges within civil registration systems. Chibalonza's advocacy extended beyond the realm of birth registration to encompass the registration of marriages within the civil registry. Despite Lubumbashi's current estimated population of 1,424,303 inhabitants, the net population increase is determined by the cumulative number of declared births annually. However, similar to the issue of birth registration, marriage registration in Lubumbashi remains infrequent due to factors such as negligence, lack of awareness, or apprehension regarding potential complications in the event of divorce. Reflecting prevailing patriarchal norms, some residents expressed reluctance to register their marriages due to concerns about potential financial risks, viewing marriage registration as jeopardising their assets.

Moreover, other individuals recognised the benefits of registered marriages, emphasising that civil marriage safeguards the interests of the entire family, particularly in instances of divorce or the death of a spouse. These contrasting perspectives underscore the persistence of patriarchal attitudes towards marriage registration, highlighting the ongoing need to dismantle gender-based disparities in society. The implementation of a computerised system by the town hall has significantly enhanced the management of registered births, marriages and deaths. Through her dynamic leadership and visionary initiatives, Chibalonza has demonstrated a commitment to social transformation. Her endeavours exemplify the urgent necessity for more women like her in the DRC, who possess the drive and vision to effect positive change and advance gender equality within society.

Conclusion

Josephine Chibalonza's enduring legacy reverberates through her tireless advocacy for birth and marriage registration, which transcends bureaucratic processes to engender profound societal impacts. Her dynamic leadership and visionary approach exemplify the indispensable role of proactive individuals in effecting positive change within civil registration systems and broader social spheres. As

the DRC grapples with systemic challenges and entrenched gender disparities, Chibalonza's example serves as a testament to the transformative potential of women leaders. Through collaborative partnerships, strategic interventions and unwavering commitment, Chibalonza has illuminated a path towards gender equality and social justice, underscoring the imperative for continued efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures and advance inclusive societies. The legacy of Josephine Chibalonza resonates as a call to action, inspiring future generations to champion progress and uphold the principles of equality and empowerment in pursuit of a more just and equitable society in the DRC and beyond.

Chapter 71

AGNÈS META-KAPITENE: A PIONEERING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION ADVOCATE-CREATIVE PIECE

Véronique Kavuo Kahindo

Introduction

The emergence of Agnès Meta-Kapitene as a pivotal yet enigmatic figure within the religious landscape of Congo-Brazzaville underscores the complex interplay between gender, theology and societal transformation. Despite her representation of her country at the inaugural gathering of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Ghana in 1989, Meta-Kapitene remains shrouded in mystery, with scant information available about her background or contributions. This dearth of substantive data necessitates an attempt to construct a semblance of her profile, albeit one lacking firsthand testimonies or concrete details. Speculatively, Meta-Kapitene may not be affiliated with theological or religious circles, as investigations conducted within the member churches of the Ecumenical Council of the Republic of Congo have failed to elucidate her identity or role. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that Meta-Kapitene embodies traits of fortitude, resilience and valour, indicative of a devout Christian dedicated to her convictions and endeavours. Through her participation in the Circle formation, Meta-Kapitene has emerged as a beacon of courage, challenging prevailing gender dynamics and advocating for the inclusion of women in theological discourse. This article seeks to explore Meta-Kapitene's role within the Circle and its broader implications for theological discourse, gender equality and societal transformation in African contexts.

Who is Agnès Meta-Kapitene?

Agnès Meta-Kapitene from Congo Brazzaville is one of the founding Circle matriarchs that attended the Circle convocation in 1989. Information of her contributions to the faith community or any other space is scarce. The speculation is that she may not have been involved in theological work as a theologian or

as a pastor. It is assumed that Agnès Meta-Kapitene may have been involved in other forms of work that did not affiliate with theological institutions or religious spaces. Due to the scarce data on Agnès Meta-Kapitene, an attempt is made in this chapter to offer a semblance of what her life may have turned out to be after the Circle meeting, she attended in Ghana. The dearth of information on Agnès Meta-Kapitene's life after the Circle shows that there may be others who also went quiet and whose information is not readily available, hence, difficult to trace beyond the Circle 1989.

Participation in the Inaugural Gathering of the Circle

Meta-Kapitene's pivotal involvement in the inception of the Circle is evidenced by her participation in its founding meeting in 1989. However, beyond this initial engagement, the historical narrative surrounding Meta-Kapitene within the Christian community of Congo remains conspicuously sparse, hindering a comprehensive understanding of her contributions to the Circle's establishment. Nevertheless, through the collective efforts of theologians in Brazzaville, Meta-Kapitene's significance as a precursor, pioneer and trailblazer in the Circle's genesis has been acknowledged and revered. Despite her relative anonymity, Meta-Kapitene's role has granted Congo Brazzaville recognition within theological circles, underscoring her status as a hero whose influence resonates in the shadows. The imperative now lies in illuminating Meta-Kapitene's profile and legacy through concerted efforts to gather comprehensive testimonies about her. The forthcoming commemoration of the Circle's 35th anniversary presents theologians with a poignant opportunity for introspection, as they reflect on their collective journey, evaluate the present landscape and chart a course for the future. Central to this reflective process is the acknowledgement of the invaluable contributions made by figures like Meta-Kapitene, who epitomise the matriarchs and pioneers of the Circle, thus reaffirming their enduring legacy and significance within the theological community.

The year 1989 marks the official inception of the Circle, a moment cherished for its gathering of 70 African women representing diverse backgrounds. Reflecting on this pivotal moment evokes memories of the nascent stages of this transformative journey, characterised by uncertainty yet fueled by the collective aspirations of these concerned African women. It is pertinent to acknowledge that not all participants hailed from theological backgrounds, nor did they all ascend to prominent societal positions. Nevertheless, the assignment entrusted to each woman at the Circle's inauguration served as a catalyst for their engagement in social discourse and their pursuit of societal transformation within their respective contexts. This catalyst sparked a resurgence in knowledge production among African women and spurred the exploration of methodologies and research approaches specific to the African female experience.

Within this framework, Meta-Kapitene, the esteemed figurehead of Congo, assumed the mantle of conveying a message of hope—a vision to empower

African women to script their narratives and disseminate this vision to others. Her engagement in the Circle formation unfolded against the backdrop of her Congolese lineage, underscoring the intersection of heritage and participation in this transformative initiative. The Circle's inception prompts contemplation on revolutionising the African female psyche, catalysing shifts in societal paradigms and igniting aspirations for pivotal social, religious and political engagements. It is imperative to envisage that, under the stewardship of our matriarch, the Circle endeavour possesses the potential to catalyse profound metamorphosis among African women. Meta Kapitene comprehended the project's intrinsic essence, which revolves around providing avenues for resistance that manifest as Christian actions capable of reshaping the social dynamics of dominance and exploitation between genders. Navigating the realms of Scripture, Tradition and Culture, Meta-Kapitene likely assumed the roles of a catalyst for social change, an educator and a custodian of social and spiritual equilibrium.

Agnès Meta-Kapitene, a Pioneer who Spawns the Path

Agnès Meta-Kapitene embodies the essence of Christ's message and serves as a representative of His kingdom, transcending societal norms that often silence and subjugate women. Through her participation in the Circle formation, she has emerged as a beacon of courage, challenging the prevailing gender dynamics and advocating for the inclusion of women in theological discourse. Regardless of the explanations offered by the Fathers of the Church to justify the exclusion of women from ordination, Meta-Kapitene firmly rooted in her Protestant identity, dismisses such arguments, asserting the universality and timelessness of Christ's message. Thus, she merits the title of honorary theologian, symbolising the significance of her testimony in championing the dignity and honour of Congolese women. Despite her anonymity within the religious sphere of Congo-Brazzaville, Meta-Kapitene's pioneering role in the Circle underscores her commendable contribution to advancing gender equality and theological discourse. As this reflection concludes, the recognition of Meta-Kapitene by younger generations marks a pivotal moment, prompting continued inquiry into her identity and legacy. Indeed, the enigma surrounding Agnès Meta-Kapitene serves as a wellspring of inspiration for emerging theologians in Congo, catalysing efforts to challenge gender and social inequalities by reshaping mindsets, behaviours and societal attitudes, thereby perpetuating the spirit of courage and resilience exemplified by Meta-Kapitene within the Circle.

Conclusion

Agnès Meta-Kapitene's legacy within the religious spheres of Congo-Brazzaville serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative potential inherent in individual agency and collective action. Despite her relative anonymity within theological circles, Meta-Kapitene's participation in the Circle of Concerned African Women

Theologians symbolises a broader movement towards gender equality, theological inclusivity and societal transformation in African societies. As we reflect on Meta-Kapitene's pioneering role within the Circle, we are reminded of the importance of recognising and amplifying the voices of marginalised individuals within theological discourse. Moving forward, it is imperative that we continue to interrogate and challenge prevailing gender norms and power structures, ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to contribute to theological dialogue and shape the future of religious practice and belief. Through this ongoing commitment to inclusivity and social justice, we honour Meta-Kapitene's legacy and perpetuate her spirit of courage, resilience and unwavering faith in the transformative potential of collective action.

Chapter 72

PIONEERING AND MOTHERING AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Mutale Mulenga Kaunda

They say that the cemetery is a place of immense wealth, for within its grounds lie dormant, unrealised and unfulfilled ideas, plans, intelligence and various ambitions that never saw the light of day. This volume is set in motion to remember all the women who were present at the Circle inauguration of 1989 in Ghana. This is in order to remember the Circle foremothers who laid the groundwork for African religious women to attain higher heights and rewrite/right their own experiences. When Mercy Amba Oduyoye noted the pressing need for the presence of African women in global ecumenical, ecclesiastical and theological spheres, she recognised and understood the significance of this endeavour and immediately set it in motion, bringing African religious women together. This initiative marked the genesis of the Circle, which aimed to create a community of women within religious contexts, ultimately leading to the mentoring of African women and their emergence in crucial global roles. Numerous Circle Pioneers took on the role of mentors and sources of inspiration for countless young African women, encouraging them to strive for greater aspirations beyond what was initially imagined in 1989.

From 1989 to 2023, the Circle has faced numerous achievements and challenges. In 2009, Isabel Apawo Phiri (2009, 105) identified four challenges that the Circle was facing in Theological Education as follows:

- (1) re-defining the identity of African women theologians; (2) promoting more women to study theology and be on permanent staff; (3) inclusion of African women's theology in the theological curriculum; and (4) collaboration with male theologians.

Since then, The Circle has purposefully engaged in partnerships with male theologians, resulting in the integration of African women's theologies into several African universities. Judging by the Circle membership, which is in the region of 800, covering twenty African countries and three African diaspora. Judging by the number of African women holding PhDs in various theological disciplines,

African women have and are making significant inroads into academic theological education and into the leadership of Faith-Based Organisations. Over time, women have gradually ascended to influential decision-making roles within educational institutions and various other domains. Nevertheless, it persists and thrives, continually nurturing the emergence of more young African women.

The Circle's Way Forward?

Musimbi Kanyoro (2006) likened the communal theology within the Circle to the act of women stringing beads together. During a period of silence in the Circle's communal publications, its members continued publishing individually. Sarojini Nadar and Mutale M. Kaunda (2017, 355) noted in 2017 that the Circle had been arguably silent both as an organisation and in its communal knowledge production. Nadar and Kaunda (2017, 355) acknowledged that

While Circle members continue to produce beads in their individual capacities, what is not clear is the initial 'communal theologising' impulse which gave rise to the stringing of the beads—the much-needed production of theological knowledge from African women.

Given this perspective, it becomes crucial to actively foster cross-regional mentorship among up-and-coming talents- the Circle rising stars. A mentor hailing from Southern Africa, for instance, can take on a mentee originating from West Africa. Considering the abundant richness and diversity inherent in African cultures, such a collaborative approach promises visible growth and a wealth of diverse perspectives.

Since 2019, there has been a return to intensified communal theologising with Musa Dube as a current continental coordinator for the Circle. Several volumes have been published, edited collectively by Circle members and chapters written by Circle members, some have continued to publish books, journal articles and book chapters individually but as Circle members. In 2021¹ alone, after the 2019 Circle conference, various co-edited volumes were published under the theme Mother Earth Mother Africa. Additionally, a substantial body of work is underway as the Circle prepares for the upcoming Sankofa conference in Ghana in 2024, titled "Sankofa: Earth, Pandemics, Gender and Religion". Following the communal African way of life, Circle members continue to collaborate on editing volumes that will be presented at the forthcoming conference. Emphasising the significance of communal writing and editing stems from the core principle of mentorship within communal theologising and writing. Consequently, to maintain its role as a network dedicated to mentoring emerging theologians, the Circle must continue to embrace communal publishing. This approach nurtures young theologians and provides them with the necessary space, resources and skills to develop and excel in their academic and religious pursuits.

Firstly, collaborative writing within the Circle stands as a pivotal component, one that should be preserved in the years to come. It serves as a form of mentoring, nurturing and guiding emerging scholars, echoing the significance of indigenous rites conducted across diverse African settings. Within the context of a ritual gathering, a young initiate finds themselves under the wing and tutelage of a mentor who imparts knowledge about the proceedings within that sacred space.

Secondly, transformation is intrinsic to the very fabric of human reality and the Circle has certainly gone through change in over three decades. Therefore, having presented the Circle pioneers, the question remains, what next for the Circle? After three decades, hundreds of women given space to tell their stories and positions in higher institutions, the Circle will continue to transform the lives of many more African women and give them space to flourish. In the past three decades, the world has experienced incomparable disruptive transformations, particularly in the gender, religious, social, cultural, relational, political and worldview domains. While the major religious presence is Christianity, the Circle embraces other religions to be members of the network. The Circle collectively and individually has published on ecological crises, migration and pandemics, there is a need to dig deeper into these research areas and also other areas such as technological revolution and population growth as emerging realities that have textured our daily lives, which calls for fresh imaginations and new ways of thinking about the nature of existence in an increasingly technological, interconnected, complex and crisis-ridden world. We are at a point when it is not only imperative but also inevitable to reevaluate and rethink the interplay between research, education, technology, artificial intelligence, spirituality and flourishing. The intersection of intergenerational, trans or cross-border mentoring, continued male theologians as Circle allies and research into the contemporary issues will continue to rejuvenate and strengthen the Circle's interconnectedness in academia and religious institutions. There is a lot that can be looked forward to for the future of the Circle and the list is not exhaustive of ways the Circle can continue to flourish.

Strengthening mentorship through collaborative research, harnessing educational standards for more African women to acquire PhDs and strengthening the quality of researchers to lead and do independent research in various fields of religious and theological education and research are important. This means that the duty to intensify interdisciplinary research collaboration with other areas such as African literature, History, Environmental Science, Sociology etc. where questions of gender and religion are addressed is a vital way forward. This also calls for undertaking fully funded research, where principal investigators acquire funds for data collection from the field analysing their findings and producing theory and methods that can enhance African womanist, gender and feminist studies. This means engaging in collaborating with Global South women scholars from Asia, Latin America and other indigenous populations and collaborating with other institutions and researchers globally strengthening collaborations with FBOs for social transformation.

Notes

- ¹ Berman, S.K., P.L. Leshota, P.L. Dunbar, E.S., Dube, M.W. and Kgalemang, M. (eds.) *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Biblical Studies: Interpretations in the Context of Climate Change*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.

Bibliography

- Berman, S.K., Leshota, P.L. Dunbar, E.S., Dube, M.W. and Kgalemang, M. (eds.) *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Biblical Studies: Interpretations in the Context of Climate Change*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021.
- Chirongoma, S. and Kiilu, V.S.W. (eds.) *Mother Earth, Mother Africa: World Religions and Environmental Imagination*. Stellenbosch: African SUN Media, 2022.
- Chirongoma, S. and Mombo, E. (eds.) *Mother Earth, Postcolonial and Liberation Theologies*. New York: Lexington Books, 2021.
- Chirongoma, S. and Rakoczy, S. (eds.) “Sacred Earth and African Women Theology.” *African Journal of Gender and Religion* 27, no. 1 (2021).
- Chisale, S. and Bosch, R.R. (eds.) *Mother Earth, Mother Africa and Theology*. HTS Religion & Society Series, vol. 10. Cape Town: AOSIS, 2021
- Kanyoro, M.R.A. “Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle.” In *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, edited by Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, 19–40. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Nadar, S. and Kaunda, M.M. “Enough Beads Strung by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians? Exploring New Agendas for Circle Theology.” In *African Christian Theologies and the Impact of the Reformation*, vol. 10, edited by H. Bedford-Strohm, T. Gatwa, T. Jähnichen and E. Musemakweli, 355–364. Germany: LIT Verlag, 2017.
- Phiri, I.A. “Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education (1989–2008).” *International Review of Mission* 98 (2009): 105–119.

Index

A

- abortion, 22, 23
- academia, 2, 35, 77, 124, 128, 148, 163-165, 192, 196, 208, 221, 222, 233, 240, 248, 252, 260, 269, 291, 293, 303, 354
- academic, 2, 12, 16-18, 24, 32-35, 41, 49, 59, 71, 74, 76, 77, 110, 120-124, 127, 131, 134, 146, 156, 179, 191-194, 196-198, 201, 202, 205, 207, 208, 211, 217, 219, 221-224, 228-230, 233, 248, 249, 254, 255, 257, 259, 260-263, 268-270, 273, 274, 286, 287, 289, 291, 292, 299, 304, 314, 315, 328, 335, 354
- accommodation, 178, 280, 299
- accomplishment(s), 21, 66, 91, 142, 155, 227, 257, 274
- Accra, 1, 46, 90, 130, 131, 136, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148, 181, 182, 201, 202, 205, 212, 222, 245, 256, 259-262, 286, 292, 309, 315, 323, 325
- achievement(s), 1, 6, 18, 26, 27, 77, 80, 84, 115, 121, 124, 142, 156, 192, 208, 218, 229, 231, 276, 281, 314, 320, 324, 352
- acknowledge(s), 1, 5, 6, 18, 33, 60, 76, 84, 115, 116, 118, 121, 142, 161, 178, 234, 285, 318, 321
- activism, 67, 69, 116, 120, 121, 123, 127, 128, 181, 253, 254, 257, 289,
- administration, 77, 122, 163, 212, 217, 230, 284, 286, 314,
- adultery, 2, 109
- advancement, 6, 84, 120, 131, 134, 172, 175, 194, 196, 198, 202, 216, 224, 229, 234, 248, 261, 267, 282, 285, 301, 302, 318, 334, 343, 345
- adversity, 110, 113, 211, 283
- advocacy, 9, 23, 28, 51, 82, 84, 85, 90, 96, 116, 120, 124, 125, 142, 170, 198, 200, 202, 204, 219, 224, 227, 234, 236, 239, 240, 248, 250, 252-254, 257, 259, 260, 262, 263, 267, 269, 271, 274, 276, 277, 281, 283, 292, 293, 295, 302, 320, 321, 345, 346
- advocate, 5, 8, 20-23, 28, 29, 32, 35, 49-51, 58, 65, 66, 78, 90, 91, 125, 130, 134, 141, 142, 150, 152, 164, 176, 190, 196, 212-223, 238, 239, 250, 252, 256, 257, 265, 267, 269, 274, 276, 281, 289, 291-293, 295, 306, 307, 310, 314, 318, 329, 335, 340, 343, 348
- affairs, 35, 39, 274, 306
- affiliation(s), 44, 112, 197, 204, 207, 226, 255, 285
- affluence, 41
- Africa, 1-6, 8-12, 15-18, 20-24, 26-27, 29, 32-35, 40, 45, 50, 59, 60, 61, 67, 71, 72, 78, 79, 82, 83, 89, 91, 112, 114-118, 121, 122, 125, 126, 128, 131, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 155, 156, 158, 160-163, 165, 166, 169-171, 178, 181, 184, 192, 193, 197, 205-207, 214, 218, 220, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234-240, 256, 257, 260, 268-271, 286, 291-293, 301, 303, 304, 306-309, 327, 334, 353
- African, 1-6, 8-12, 15-18, 20-24, 26-30, 31-35, 37-41, 44-47, 50, 51, 53, 59-61, 64, 65, 67, 71, 73, 74, 78, 80, 82-84, 88, 90, 94-96, 104, 107, 110-112, 115-118, 120, 122-127, 130-134, 136-138, 140-142, 145, 146, 148-150, 153-158, 160-163, 165, 169-173, 175, 176, 179, 180-182, 190, 192, 194, 196-198, 200, 202, 204-208, 210, 211, 214, 215-217, 219, 221-223, 225-234, 236-240, 242, 244-262, 266-271, 273, 274, 277-280, 282-284, 286-295, 297-310, 313-317, 318-320, 323-325, 327, 328, 332, 334-337, 339, 342, 345, 348-354
- Africanising, 22, 23
- Afrocentric, 21, 46, 47
- Afro-Feminist, 40
- agency, 4, 85, 115, 130, 169, 179, 234, 278, 283, 305, 350
- alcohol, 109
- America, 32, 59, 65, 89, 191, 206, 221, 280, 313, 320, 238, 354
- ancestor(s), 24, 49, 50, 51, 162, 173, 256, 313

Anglican Church, 44, 45, 47, 77, 78, 114, 117, 118, 145, 218
 Angola, 109-113, 186
 antiracism, 116
 apartheid, 16, 114-116, 122, 155, 184
 appointment(s), 46, 55, 77, 111, 136, 139, 147, 140, 200, 205, 212, 214, 215, 230, 280,
 apprehension, 46, 146, 346
 approach(es), 9, 23, 31, 37, 38, 40, 41, 47, 55-57, 60, 64, 73, 83-85, 89, 117, 120-121, 124, 133, 136, 138, 142, 169, 176, 197, 201, 204, 207, 210, 234, 238, 239, 254, 257, 265, 270, 275, 289, 291-294, 335, 337, 343, 346, 349, 353
 appropriation, 145, 322,
 aspiration(s), 34, 60, 109, 131, 176, 200, 216, 229, 278, 280, 301, 302, 306 349, 350, 352,
 assembly, 12, 27, 40, 46, 54, 78, 172, 193, 200, 213, 250, 282, 315
 association(s), 8, 11, 16, 32, 35, 59, 71, 77, 91, 111, 116, 130, 131, 192, 197, 205, 207, 222, 226, 231, 250, 256, 257, 260, 261, 273, 280, 286, 287, 304, 320, 323, 337, 343,
 Atlanta, 89, 243, 244, 314, 319,
 Atrocities, 5, 72, 126
 attitude(s), 30, 32, 46, 55, 56, 92, 172, 179, 239, 251, 282, 346, 350,
 attribute(s), 22, 76, 177, 201, 276, 292
 audience(s), 21, 176, 256,
 authorit(ies), 2, 12, 15, 17, 20, 39, 139, 172, 173, 213,
 autophenomenography, 120, 121
 awareness, 16, 34, 37, 51, 66, 67, 126, 133, 134, 146, 166, 193, 266, 326, 346,

B

Babukusu, 4, 24,
 background(s), 8, 16, 18, 20, 31, 32, 61, 66, 76, 78, 80, 90, 112, 115, 127, 130, 131, 134, 147, 155, 160, 196, 200, 210, 226, 236, 242, 234, 254, 255, 257, 260, 263, 268, 274, 279, 284, 286, 291, 292, 298, 310, 348, 349
 banking, 79, 131

barrier(s), 5, 31, 48, 60, 79, 82-84, 91, 98, 101, 112, 171, 231, 239, 247, 248, 275, 277, 282, 339
 beacon, 90, 92, 96, 106, 127, 184, 194, 219, 227, 233, 236, 247, 253, 257, 259, 262, 276, 290, 301, 306, 339, 345, 348, 350
 belief(s), 10, 35, 51, 29, 53, 76, 85, 93, 125, 126, 194, 211, 225, 254, 257, 266, 269, 270, 274, 276, 285, 295, 301, 302, 327, 351
 believers, 193, 200, 253, 255, 264, 308, 321,
 biases, 20, 22, 44, 46, 55, 74, 79, 83, 121, 239, 282,
 bible, 6, 16, 17, 21, 37, 41, 53, 54, 56, 60-62, 84, 91, 110, 111, 122, 123, 126, 146-148, 166, 185, 187, 190, 207, 211, 226, 261, 264, 273, 276, 322, 330
 biography, 5, 130, 150, 154, 176, 190, 205, 208, 221, 298, 342
 birth(s), 1, 2, 11, 15, 18, 86, 134, 194, 204, 205, 224, 249, 260, 268, 271, 294, 345, 346
 bishop(s), 11, 44, 45, 46, 49, 55, 65, 68, 78, 139, 160, 165, 166, 187, 210, 213, 214, 218, 260, 275, 320, 321
 black, 2, 5, 16, 41, 115, 116, 126, 131, 138, 151, 158, 162, 179, 221, 275, 308, 313-323, 332
 bone(s), 94, 95
 Botswana, 12, 18, 148, 158, 238
 boundar(ies), 20, 24, 78, 184, 314
 brainstorm, 4
 Brazil, 110
 Bulawayo, 167
 burden(s), 100, 102, 265, 307, 316, 331
 business, 77, 78, 111, 112, 217, 218, 219, 265

C

cabinet, 217
 Cameroon, 16, 59, 206, 230, 239, 303-306
 Campaign(s), 51, 66, 124, 158, 163, 164, 281, 346
 canon, 17, 45, 50, 76, 77, 79, 80, 317
 capacity(ies), 2, 46, 47, 51, 53, 55, 120, 123, 127, 131, 134, 212, 213, 216, 229, 230, 234, 252, 257, 259, 260-263, 269, 270, 276, 286, 289, 293, 340, 345, 353

- capitalism, 9, 62, 79
- career(s), 28, 40, 41, 44, 49, 64, 77, 112, 116, 120-124, 127, 131, 146, 147, 150, 152, 153, 156-158, 179, 185, 192, 201, 202, 212, 213, 216, 217, 225, 227, 230, 248, 249, 259, 261, 262, 269, 270, 288, 300, 301, 303, 334
- Caribbean, 328, 330, 332
- catalytic, 149
- cattle, 151
- celebration, 29, 65, 69, 74, 194, 237, 239, 262, 315, 326
- ceremony(ies), 44, 77, 206, 281
- challenge(s), 20, 24, 26, 28, 33, 35, 41, 46-48, 50, 51, 56, 57, 60, 61, 68, 69, 73, 76, 80, 83-85, 110-112, 124, 125, 132, 134, 138, 139, 142, 151, 152, 153, 157-159, 166, 169, 170, 172, 178, 180, 182, 186, 189, 190, 194, 210, 214, 216, 231, 232, 236, 240, 244, 247, 248, 251-253, 255, 257, 260, 264, 266, 275, 276, 278, 282, 283, 288, 289, 292, 293, 298, 299, 301-304, 306-310, 318, 321-324, 327, 330, 343, 345, 346, 347, 350-352
- characteristic(s), 34, 37, 170, 180, 201, 292
- Chewa, 4, 121
- children, 2, 28, 31, 32, 36, 41, 49, 51, 55-57, 77, 78, 92, 109-111, 121, 122, 126, 133, 137, 141, 143, 145, 152, 153, 159, 163, 165, 179, 200, 213, 224, 225, 229, 243, 245, 246, 250, 252, 260, 265, 266, 273, 279, 284, 298, 299, 301, 302, 304, 318, 325, 331, 335, 340, 346
- Chingola, 137
- Choice(s), 9, 56, 96, 110, 117, 146, 147, 176, 186, 301, 307, 308, 327
- chores, 32, 76, 110, 165, 293
- Christian, 8, 11, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 33, 35, 45, 47, 49, 64, 73, 78, 85, 88, 90-92, 110, 111, 116, 128, 131, 138, 150-153, 156, 161, 164, 172, 180, 193, 194, 205, 207, 208, 211, 212, 214, 215, 217, 219, 222, 225, 226, 229, 254, 255, 259, 260, 261, 265, 269, 280, 300, 303, 304, 309, 315, 316, 319, 326, 327, 329, 330, 335, 348, 349, 350
- Christianity, 9, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 33, 60, 71, 190, 194, 205, 206, 207, 221, 222, 226, 254, 255, 269, 270, 293, 295, 306, 313, 354
- church(es), 2, 3, 8, 10-12, 17, 21-24, 26-29, 32-34, 37, 44-48, 50, 53-61, 64-69, 77, 78, 80, 83, 85, 88, 107, 109, 111, 114, 116-118, 121, 123-128, 131-134, 136-142, 145, 146, 148, 150-158, 160-173, 175, 177-182, 184-188, 190, 193, 200, 205, 208, 210-222, 224-227, 229, 236-240, 242-247, 250-253, 259, 260-267, 269, 273-277, 279-282, 284, 285, 288, 290, 293-295, 297, 300-310, 313-316, 318-331, 334-336, 339, 340, 350
- churchwomen, 1, 79
- circle(s), 1-6, 8-12, 15-18, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 31-34, 37, 38, 41, 44, 46-48, 50-54, 57-62, 64-69, 71, 73, 74, 78-80, 82, 83, 86, 88-91, 94-97, 107, 110, 113, 114, 116-118, 123-125, 127, 130-134, 136-142, 145, 146, 149, 150, 153-157, 159-161, 163-165, 167, 169-171, 175, 176, 180-182, 184, 187, 188, 190, 192, 194, 196-198, 200, 202, 204, 206-208, 210, 214-216, 219, 221, 222, 226-228, 230, 231, 233-240, 242, 244-252, 254-257, 259-262, 266-271, 273, 275-278, 280-287, 289-293, 295, 298, 300-303, 306-309, 313-316, 318, 323-325, 327, 328, 332, 334, 337, 339, 340, 342, 344, 348-354
- circumstances, 2, 41, 211, 251, 278, 305, 310,
- citizenship, 33, 227, 346
- class(es), 23, 27, 44, 57, 61, 77, 109, 110, 111, 114, 121, 127, 142, 146, 147, 151, 162, 201, 211, 260, 261, 300, 315, 318, 319, 320-323, 329
- classroom, 35, 121, 125-127, 148, 156, 182, 185, 215, 227, 326, 331
- clergy, 26-29, 45, 46, 117, 130, 133, 137, 138, 140, 158, 160, 161, 165-167, 175, 182, 192, 194, 204, 275
- cohesion, 120, 128, 176, 285,
- colleague(s), 23, 45, 138, 180, 186, 187, 218, 265, 275, 301, 329, 330, 331
- colonisation, 9, 38, 109, 186
- commemoration, 204, 349
- commitment(s), 9, 10, 23, 44, 47, 49, 51, 56, 58, 76, 78, 83, 84, 114-116, 124, 125,

- 127, 128, 132, 134, 148, 152, 154, 162, 175, 186, 192, 194, 197, 198, 200, 202, 210, 212, 214, 215, 218, 219, 221, 223-226, 227, 229, 230, 233, 236, 239, 240, 247, 248, 250, 252, 254-257, 259, 260, 262, 266-269, 271, 277, 282, 283, 284, 287, 289, 290, 293, 295, 300-302, 304, 306, 328, 337, 340, 341, 343-347, 351
- communication(s), 16, 20, 21, 23, 56, 176, 251, 265, 285, 286,
- communit(ies), 1-6, 10-12, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 44, 50, 51, 55-61, 66, 67, 71, 73, 77, 79, 93, 99, 111, 112, 114, 115, 125, 128, 130, 134, 137, 138, 140-143, 152, 157, 159, 160, 163, 165, 166, 171-173, 176, 178, 181, 185, 187, 188, 192, 193, 196, 198, 202, 208, 210-215, 223, 224, 226, 227, 229, 231, 233, 237, 239, 240, 242, 245-247, 251, 252, 254-256, 259-261, 269, 270, 273, 274, 278, 284, 285, 288, 289-292, 297, 302, 308, 313, 316, 317, 319, 320, 321, 331, 334, 335, 337, 340, 341, 348, 349, 352
- condition(s), 3, 170, 245, 250, 266, 293, 299, 305, 307, 309, 343,
- conference(s), 1, 11, 12, 17, 18, 21, 27, 28, 50, 65, 66, 68, 88, 78, 112, 123, 131-133, 146, 148, 157, 158, 172, 181, 200, 202, 206, 207, 214, 218, 219, 222, 226, 228, 231, 237, 237, 242, 250, 251, 256, 273-277, 280-282, 284, 287, 293, 300, 301, 304, 306, 314, 315, 319, 323, 327, 328, 334, 342, 353
- confidence, 115, 126, 140, 155, 282, 301
- congregants, 55, 161, 162, 164, 166, 266
- congregation, 21, 153, 178, 179, 191, 206, 211, 244, 245, 249, 250, 285, 286, 299, 326, 336
- connection(s), 5, 45, 60, 80, 114, 116, 132, 194, 229, 265, 287
- consciousness, 15, 40, 41, 148, 246
- constitution, 79, 179, 222
- contemporary, 34, 35, 47, 72, 83, 85, 161, 169, 193, 203, 213, 219, 238, 246, 254, 256, 275, 282, 295, 308, 309, 342, 354
- context(s), 2, 3, 9, 15, 18, 20, 23, 26, 29, 31, 33, 39, 40, 44, 46, 57, 59, 60, 61, 65, 66, 71, 83, 84, 85, 111, 120, 127, 130, 134, 148, 150, 153, 157, 169, 170, 179, 184, 190, 191, 193, 194, 197, 204, 207, 208, 212, 216-221, 223, 229, 231, 232, 236, 238, 239, 246, 251, 262, 267, 269, 270, 278, 282, 285, 289, 291, 293, 295, 298, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 310, 316, 322, 323, 330, 331, 332, 334, 336, 348, 349, 352, 354
- continent(s), 1, 9, 16, 22, 30, 122, 132, 134, 138, 160, 161, 166, 176, 180, 200, 219, 235, 236, 238, 256, 262, 270, 335,
- contribution(s), 1, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 29, 31, 38-40, 44, 46, 47, 50, 57, 58, 61, 65, 71, 73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 82, 84, 85, 90, 92, 93, 96, 110, 117, 120, 121, 127, 128, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136, 150, 155, 156, 169, 179, 180, 184, 186, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 200, 207, 208, 210, 212, 214-216, 218, 219, 221-224, 229, 233, 234, 236, 237, 239, 242, 245-249, 251-257, 259, 261, 262, 267, 269, 271, 276, 278, 283, 284, 286, 288, 289, 291-295, 302, 306, 320, 323, 330, 334, 335, 337, 339, 340, 342, 343, 348, 349, 350
- convocation, 1, 6, 50, 141, 145, 146, 148, 150, 306, 316, 332, 348
- coordinator(s), 17, 27, 28, 45, 54, 56, 68, 139, 141, 172, 273-275, 330, 345, 353
- counsellor, 207, 226, 230, 301, 302
- countr(ies), 16, 38, 40, 51, 67, 73, 82, 88, 120, 132, 137, 160-162, 187, 188, 219, 230, 245, 286, 300, 320, 348, 352
- criticism, 22, 65, 327,
- culture(s), 2, 5, 6, 8-10, 12, 15-17, 22, 32, 33, 47, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 73, 83, 86, 110, 112, 116, 123, 124, 133, 134, 141, 162, 163, 169, 170, 172, 190, 192, 194, 198, 206, 221, 237-239, 242, 260, 264, 270, 273, 278, 281, 282, 289, 291-295, 307, 309, 316, 317, 322, 326, 327, 330, 332, 335-337, 350, 353
- curriculum, 28, 50, 77, 120, 124, 125, 155, 159, 206, 207, 330, 334, 352
- D**
- deaconesses, 142, 181, 182, 275, 276,
- dean(s), 21, 120, 124, 185, 187, 200, 230,

- death, 18, 23, 60, 62, 84, 94, 95, 125, 206, 208, 243, 245, 251, 264, 266, 314, 346,
- decade(s), 8, 11, 21, 95, 132, 133, 160, 166, 169, 204, 226, 237, 239, 240, 250, 284, 315, 330, 342, 354
- dedication, 51, 66, 77, 78, 90, 117, 134, 143, 154, 163, 182, 194, 196, 198, 200, 202, 303, 207, 210, 212, 214, 215, 218, 219, 222, 223, 224, 226, 227, 233, 234, 248, 252, 253, 255, 257, 259, 262, 264, 267-271, 283, 288-290, 300, 302-304, 340, 341, 343
- degree(s), 6, 8, 15, 21, 27, 32, 39, 45, 49, 50, 54, 59, 60, 68, 77, 111, 122, 138, 146, 152, 156, 163, 172, 178, 186, 187, 191, 193, 197, 205, 229, 230, 249, 254-256, 259, 261, 285, 299, 300, 304, 314, 318,
- dehumanising, 3, 264, 295, 305
- delegations, 213,
- department(s), 16, 21, 33, 34, 72, 73, 120, 122, 145, 147, 148, 181, 182, 191, 192, 197, 228, 230, 254, 255, 287, 320, 340,
- destitution, 305
- detractors, 61
- development(s), 39, 41, 45, 47, 66, 67, 69, 71, 72, 76, 77, 78, 88, 91, 92, 117, 123, 124, 130, 131, 149, 158, 164, 177, 198, 201, 202, 205, 210, 219, 224, 228-231, 233-235, 249, 250, 259, 262, 265, 266, 274, 278, 284, 285, 287, 289, 298, 300, 307, 308, 319, 321, 340
- dialogue(s), 10, 33, 34, 38, 56, 59, 73, 117, 133, 157, 161, 190, 208, 227, 254, 256, 257, 286, 287, 289, 292, 307, 316, 319, 332, 351
- diasporic, 256, 323, 324,
- dignity, 16, 28, 29, 37, 39, 48, 53, 83-86, 90, 126, 128, 134, 141, 153, 155, 172, 180, 181, 247, 273, 281, 283, 295, 302, 321, 336, 343, 350,
- diploma(s), 6, 21, 49, 77, 110, 131, 147, 156, 157, 185, 229, 249, 254, 255, 274, 285, 299,
- director, 28, 68, 72, 112, 124, 138, 139, 140, 156, 214, 219, 222, 224, 225, 250, 261, 286, 314, 319, 328, 334, 340, 342,
- disabilit(ies), 28, 53, 54, 56, 159,
- disease(s), 23, 51, 305, 309, 336
- disciplinary, 148, 250
- discourse(s), 4, 9, 34, 38, 40, 79, 83-85, 132, 134, 173, 176, 192, 193, 205, 208, 210, 216, 231, 234, 238-240, 248, 252-254, 256, 257, 259, 268, 270, 271, 278, 282-284, 289, 291, 293, 294, 295, 303, 305, 310, 316, 320, 326, 330, 331, 335, 348-351,
- discrimination, 55, 138, 142, 251, 273, 275, 301, 305, 313, 329, 343,
- dissertation(s), 22, 24, 104, 193, 206, 207,
- diversity, 61, 126, 256, 285, 303, 353
- division(s), 72, 100, 190, 230, 245, 285, 287
- doctoral, 21, 24, 45, 123, 178, 191, 193, 197, 207, 287, 314,
- documentation(s), 1, 57, 69, 113, 204, 286, 293,
- domain(s), 132, 170, 217, 234, 261, 269, 334, 339, 342, 353, 354
- domestic, 28, 32, 110, 165, 170, 293, 305, 337,
- dominance, 38, 60, 74, 163, 294, 305, 306, 350,
- domination, 62, 294, 295, 335,
- donation(s), 111, 167,
- dut(ies), 3, 4, 61, 18, 56, 57, 77, 137, 147, 152, 153, 170, 196, 213, 216, 218, 230, 282, 284, 293, 300, 302, 308, 310, 337, 340, 354,
- dynamic(s), 35, 38, 83, 85, 125, 131, 133, 207, 208, 236, 238, 239, 254, 257, 283, 294, 307, 348, 250, 255, 257, 303, 346

E

- earth, 16, 18, 91, 141, 165, 177, 213, 306, 353,
- ecclesial, 120, 121, 125, 127, 193, 205, 233, 322,
- economic, 3, 4, 46, 73, 127, 128, 130, 132, 133, 182, 232, 234, 250, 251, 269, 285, 293, 305, 307, 309, 336, 343,
- econom(ies), 2, 5, 133, 134,
- ecumenical, 8, 11, 12, 15, 18, 26-29, 35, 45, 72, 78, 88, 116, 117, 120, 123, 124, 130, 131, 132, 134, 138, 157, 190, 192, 205, 206, 221-223, 237, 250, 255-257, 259-261, 273, 274, 280, 286, 304, 315, 320, 323, 325, 327, 329, 330, 332, 348, 352

- ecumenism, 45, 127, 132, 207, 320
- education, 6, 11, 16, 17, 21, 27-29, 31, 32, 39, 40, 44-47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 60, 66-68, 74, 76-79, 88, 90-92, 97, 109, 110, 113, 115, 120-123, 125, 127, 131, 137, 141, 145, 147, 151-154, 156-159, 162, 169, 171, 177, 178, 186, 188, 191, 192, 196-198, 201, 202, 204, 205, 210-213, 215, 218, 222, 224-227, 229, 230, 231, 236-239, 243, 243, 247-252, 259-262, 265, 266, 268, 269, 271, 274, 279, 280, 284, 285, 286, 288-291, 293, 299, 300, 302-305, 313-315, 319, 326, 328-329, 332, 335, 336, 339-343, 352, 353, 354
- educator(s), 6, 80, 111, 184, 185, 188, 191, 192, 210, 219, 227, 259, 261, 262, 279, 321, 325, 350
- election(s), 40, 46, 78, 117, 118, 139, 156, 213, 256, 320
- emancipation, 3-5, 35, 38, 54, 114, 116, 170, 221, 234, 263, 266, 306 309, 344
- emotions, 102
- empire(s), 49, 133, 166
- empowerment, 3, 8, 9, 16, 17, 39, 49, 50, 65, 67, 68, 85, 90, 91, 167, 176, 194, 196, 198, 202, 215, 217, 219, 222, 227, 234, 236, 239, 240, 246-250, 252, 255, 256, 257, 259, 260, 262, 262, 265-267, 269, 270, 271, 276, 277, 282, 289, 301, 315, 334, 337, 339, 340, 341, 343, 347
- endeavour(s), 1, 44, 47, 56, 61, 78, 120, 132, 133, 175, 192, 194, 196, 197, 200, 201, 204, 216, 218, 224, 229, 233, 234, 236, 247, 249, 264, 268-270, 278, 281-283, 287, 288, 293, 295, 298, 301, 302, 306, 334, 345, 346, 348, 350, 352
- energy, 18, 133, 155, 181, 268
- engagement(s), 11, 17, 33, 35, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 71, 73, 78, 82, 85, 110, 113, 124, 130, 132, 133, 138, 170, 175, 192, 197, 200, 204, 208, 218, 221-224, 227, 231, 233, 234, 238, 250, 252, 254, 257, 260, 262, 268, 269, 284, 293, 302, 206, 331, 332, 335, 340, 342, 343, 349, 350
- engineer, 288
- England, 8, 39, 65, 78, 122, 230
- Environment(s), 47, 56, 92, 109, 112, 137, 138, 141, 171, 190, 234, 247, 250, 285, 301, 305, 307, 308, 309, 343
- equality, 3, 5, 34, 47, 57, 64-66, 69, 73, 76, 83-85, 90, 114, 117, 118, 124, 127, 155, 165, 182, 221-223, 233, 247, 248, 250, 252, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271, 277, 289, 290, 306, 310, 313, 321, 323, 334, 336, 340, 343, 344, 346-348, 350, 351
- establishment(s), 5, 6, 64, 67, 85, 117, 133, 134, 136, 158, 192, 194, 196, 198, 202, 211, 216, 218, 219, 222, 233, 248, 250, 265-267, 270, 273, 278, 286, 306, 330, 339, 349
- ethic(s), 2, 3, 15, 28, 34, 35, 76, 210, 212, 251, 270, 304, 314, 316, 317, 323, 343
- Ethiopia, 12
- ethnic, 20, 24, 61, 112, 256
- Eurocentric, 20
- European(s), 22, 50, 225, 321, 326, 332, 335, 336
- evangelism, 61, 91, 97, 224-227, 229, 323, 331
- evangelist, 53, 65, 185, 186, 276
- event(s), 6, 21, 34, 111, 113, 132, 170, 171, 172, 181, 201, 214, 226, 231, 245, 246, 251, 266, 281, 287, 326, 327
- examinations, 1, 55, 58, 77, 82, 91, 123, 145, 193, 194, 208, 212, 216, 219, 224, 225, 261, 270, 280, 281, 299
- excellence, 29, 76, 93, 256, 261, 315, 320
- exclusion, 5, 28, 33, 55, 117, 158, 163, 170, 172, 184, 305, 308, 329, 350
- excursions, 126
- experience(s), 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 15, 20, 24, 29, 32, 33, 38, 40, 46, 53, 55, 56, 58-61, 65, 66, 69, 73, 74, 83, 85, 112, 113-118, 121, 123, 130, 132, 134, 136-142, 148, 152-154, 156, 157, 161, 163, 170, 171, 176, 180, 184, 187, 197, 204-206, 208, 210, 211, 222, 226, 232, 244, 245, 252, 254, 255, 266, 269, 274, 276-279, 282, 286, 294, 299, 302, 305, 307, 316-18, 321-323, 329, 332, 335, 349
- expertise, 21, 22, 35, 78, 132, 206, 228, 229, 269, 279
- expression, 34, 35, 84, 115, 176, 205

F

- faith, 2, 4, 5, 9, 16, 17, 26, 32-34, 47, 53, 56, 58-60, 68, 69, 73, 76, 78, 106, 116, 128, 130, 134, 140, 142-145, 148, 150, 152, 153, 161, 162, 167, 175, 177, 184, 185, 187, 190, 191, 198, 202, 203, 206, 211, 216, 219, 224, 226, 227, 229, 239, 240, 242, 252-257, 259, 260, 262, 266, 274-277, 286-300, 301, 302, 307, 308, 311, 314, 323, 334, 335, 348, 351, 353
- famil(ies), 5 20 26 40 45 47 55, 56, 57, 76, 77, 83, 90, 109, 110, 111, 112, 121, 122, 123, 131, 137, 145, 151, 152, 153, 154, 162, 177, 178, 179, 182, 184, 190, 191, 201, 210, 2017, 218, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 243, 245, 246, 252, 254 umm 255, 257, 259, 260, 263, 264, 265, 266, 268, 273, 284, 288, 289, 291, 292, 297, 298, 301, 302, 305, 310, 325, trial rights and food to, 343, 346,
- farm, 76, 155
- female(s), 8, the 11, 27, 29, 31, 32, food, 41, 45, 49, 55, 64, 67, 68, 116, 123, 125, 126, 127, 131, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 156, 158, 160, 161, why American 63, 165, 167, 175, 177, 100-1078, 179, 180, 181, 182, 185, 187, 192, 197, 214, 280, 236, 239, 242, 244, 245, 246, 247, 249, 264, 266, 270, 275, 279, 280, 82, 284, 286, 292, 293, 294, 299, 300, 301, 302, 308, 314, 331, 334, 335, 340, 349, 350
- feminist(s), 2, 15, 17, 20, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41, 42, 50, 61, 65, 66, 69, 83, 84, 85, 86, 116, 117, 145, 146, 160, 161, 162, 190, 193, 212, 222, 269, 270, 294, 315, 319, 321, 327, 328, 329, 331, 332, 354
- feminism, 9, 24, 32, 30, 34, 38, 162, 163, 270 208, 323, 327, 332
- festschrift, 228, 229
- figure(s), one, 6, 24, 41, 44, 64, 65, 90, 120, 123, 136, one 22, 175, 192, 194, 198, 200, 208, 210, 219, 221, 222, 230, 233-236, 248, 250, 254, 259, 265, 284, 288, 294, 300, 303, 306, 307, 342, 344, 348, 349
- finance, 79
- framework(s), 3, 6, 9, 17, 35, 39, 58, 61, 85, 176224, 230, 231, 253, 269, 270, 279, 293, 294, 303, 316, 334, 337, 349
- fraternity, 26, 202
- freedom(s), 28, 68, 84, 85, 86, 101, 117, 126, 127, 148, 179, 180, 186, 187, 207. 251, 273, 307, 308, 336
- food, 29, 116, 124, 186, 222, 245, 264, 335, 340
- foreign, 2, 12, 15, 17, 73
- formation, 1, 3, 15, 17, 44, 60, 61, 67, 117, 132, 133, 136, 192, 196, 198, 202, 214, 222, 227, 242, 244, 247, 249, 257, 269, 275, 280, 286, 292, 293, 315, 330, 337, 342, 348, 350
- forum(s), 60, 65, 68, 69, 83, 134, 142, 306, 319, 320, 340
- founder(s), 8, 21, 31, 117, 124, 140, 156, 158, 159, 163, 197, 219, 234, 235, 238, 256, 259, 262, 286, 289, 290, 319
- foundation(s), 1, 12, 16, 41, 47, 59, 68, 77, 98, 117, 131, 132-134, 156, 159, 173, 203, 222, 230, 234, 268, 274, 275, 291, 294, 303, 306, 310, 314, 329
- fundraiser, 80, 226,
- funding, 77-79, 112, 134, 156, 343
- funeral, 110, 210-214, 217-219, 221, 225, 226,

G

- Gaborone, 18, 148
- gatherings, 1, 34, 50, 54, 60, 78, 82, 91, 132, 133, 142, 153, 154, 157, 162, 172, 181, 200, 206, 226, 234, 251, 255, 276, 280, 327, 348, 349, 356
- gender(s), 2, 5, 11, 16, 17, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31-33, 35, 37, 38, 44, 46-48, 51, 53-55, 59, 60, 61, 64-69, 71-73, 76, 83-85, 114-117, 120, 121, 123-127, 132, 133, 134, 139, 140-142, 148, 158 -167, 169, 170, 172, 193, 194, 196, 197, 204, 206, 208, 221, 222, 231-234, 236, 238-240, 246, 247, 248, 250-252, 254, 256, 257, 260, 264-271, 273, 275-277, 283, 289, 290, 292-294, 301, 302, 306, 308, 309, 320, 323, 327, 328, 334, 336, 337, 340, 343, 344, 346, 347, 350, 351, 353

generation(s), 3, 4, 5, 8, 17, 24, 48, 57, 64, 66, 67, 69, 84, 92, 98, 117, 128, 173, 184, 194, 224, 229, 234-237, 240, 247, 248, 253, 259, 262, 271, 274, 270, 283, 289, 290, 297, 300, 303, 310, 313, 341, 342, 344, 347, 350

genocide, 71-74

Germany, 78, 157-157, 230, 250

Ghana, 1, 8, 16, 21, 31, 37, 46, 50, 59, 60, 80, 82, 89-92, 95, 102, 113, 117, 127, 130-132, 136, 137, 141, 142, 150, 153-155, 157, 160, 141, 164, 165, 170, 180-182, 187, 192, 196-198, 200, 202, 204-206, 210, 211, 213, 214, 216, 217, 219, 221, 222, 224-227, 230, 234, 237, 242-249, 254-256, 287, 251, 260-268, 270, 271, 273, 278, 279, 280, 281, 286, 288-290, 297-302, 315, 323, 325, 327, 328, 330, 334, 339, 342, 345, 348, 349, 352, 353

girl(s), 1, 2, 8, 15, 16, 18, 28, 31, 32, 41, 44, 47, 49, 54, 68, 76, 77, 78, 80, 91, 92, 109, 110, 115, 131, 137, 145, 151, 156, 166, 167, 184, 185, 187, 200, 201, 211, 222, 225, 227, 234, 235, 243, 259, 260, 261, 262, 265, 279, 280, 281, 285, 288, 291, 292, 293, 299, 300, 305, 315, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 331, 335, 340

global, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 27, 28, 32, 35, 51, 65, 72, 79, 80, 116, 28, 130, 134, 141, 161, 192, 204, 205, 226, 27, 286, 307, 310, 327, 352

globalisation, 35, 229

goal(s), 33, 34, 54, 61, 68, 164, 234, 282

God, 3, 11, 72, 34, 41, 45, 48, 55, 56, 51, 61, 76, 85, 94, 95, 97, 98, 106, 128, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 146, 157, 166, 171, 177, 182, 188, 193, 194, 204, 205, 211, 218, 229, 237, 238, 245, 246, 249, 250, 251, 264, 274, 275, 276, 277, 081, 282, 284, 292, 295, 297, 300, 301, 302, 307, 308, 309, 316, 321, 323, 340, 342

gospel, 22, 62, 68, 126, 137, 154, 253, 249, 264, 284, 306, 307, 309, 310, 330

government, 66, 115, 116, 155, 186, 190, 219, 225, 231, 244, 286, 299, 345, 346

grace, 18, 49, 69, 100, 101, 102, 106, 126, 153, 175, 200, 231, 259, 263, 325

graduation, 45, 104, 122, 138, 166, 185, 230, 248, 331

grandparents, 151, 155, 200,

gratitude, 55, 84, 106, 275

guardian, 106

guidance, 46, 147, 194, 197, 229, 230, 254, 274, 289, 309, 302

H

harassment, 123,

headmaster, 212

headmistress, 214, 224, 225, 227, 259, 261

health, 5, 23, 28, 39, 47, 49, 50, 51, 71, 72, 111, 132, 142, 154, 159, 201, 219, 231, 248, 251, 252, 253, 285, 286, 299, 335, 336,

healthcare, 51, 115, 219,

heart(s), 29, 33, 80, 93, 102-104, 107, 154, 178, 221, 236, 252, 281, 325, 329, 337,

Hebrew, 147

herdsmen, 151

heritage, 65, 72, 176, 251, 259, 298, 350

hermeneutical, 3, 145, 146, 148, 149, 205, 293

heroine, 26, 30

herstor(ies), 4, 10, 12, 47

history, 5, 17, 34, 38, 44, 47, 60, 65, 97, 98, 115, 122, 127, 130, 136, 150, 151, 154, 156, 158, 162, 176, 182, 186, 191, 198, 201, 204, 206, 207, 212, 219, 222, 229, 242, 261, 269, 279, 285, 297, 303, 310, 313, 314, 320, 332, 339, 354

HIV/AIDS, 17, 21, 27, 28, 33, 50, 51, 74, 120, 124, 126, 132, 198, 266, 270, 336

holiness, 64, 68

holy, 29, 45, 55, 57, 163, 191, 193, 284-286, 308, 329, 336

home, 22, 34, 39, 41, 76, 91, 93, 111, 112, 115, 116, 120, 123, 132, 133, 151, 153, 159, 167, 176, 185-187, 211, 214, 225, 226, 280, 304, 319, 326, 331, 336, 342

honorary, 16, 117, 128, 156, 205, 226, 318, 350

household(s), 17, 32, 76, 133, 145, 165, 166, 170, 288, 294, 304, 313,

human, 2, 3, 10, 16, 29, 37, 39, 53, 57, 71-73, 83, 83, 114, 126, 139, 141, 146, 149, 155, 172, 180, 181, 245, 251, 282, 284,

- 285, 287, 305, 310, 315, 316, 322, 236, 342
- humanit(ies), 3, 16, 22, 41, 55, 56, 61, 72, 126, 127, 136, 146, 147, 205, 250, 264, 282, 284, 308, 309, 318, 319, 322, 323, 336, 342,
- humanitarian, 72, 226, 227
- humankind, 263, 309,
- husband(s), 49, 60, 77, 111-113, 125, 151, 152, 154, 163, 177, 178, 180, 182, 212, 213, 215, 265, 274, 292, 301, 302
- hymns, 126
- I
- Idea(s), 2, 17, 23, 50, 65, 69, 83, 88, 127, 136, 137, 141, 146, 157, 171, 193, 202, 208, 221, 228, 245, 247, 246, 270, 274, 287, 310, 316, 335, 352
- identit(ies), 5, 9, 10, 61, 62, 158, 175, 176, 179, 182, 237, 255, 270, 281, 293, 294, 301, 303, 307, 323, 346, 348, 350, 352
- idiom, 114
- ignorance, 306, 335
- imitators, 3
- inauguration, 2, 6, 9, 31, 38, 54, 82, 83, 94, 110, 113, 130, 133, 136, 137, 138, 141, 142, 150, 160, 161, 164, 165, 180-182, 196, 197, 204, 206, 219, 237, 242, 78, 327, 349, 352
- inception, 9, 12, 47, 60, 117, 130, 155, 192, 196, 197, 204, 216, 221, 226, 231, 248, 254, 273, 275, 283, 292, 306, 337, 349, 350
- inclusivity, 34, 61, 126, 141, 223, 234, 236, 239, 240, 246, 247, 276, 277, 285, 330, 351
- inculturation, 22-24, 190, 222, 223, 291, 292, 294, 337
- independence, 15, 111, 112, 131, 179, 337, 343
- indigenous, 125, 158, 239, 245, 254, 255, 278, 354
- individual(s), 6, 29, 34, 51, 54, 56, 60, 73, 85, 109, 114, 133, 142, 143, 145, 166, 175-177, 197, 211, 216, 221, 238, 239, 247, 251, 255, 257, 264, 267, 275, 281, 283, 285, 290, 295, 298, 302, 304, 306, 326, 335, 341, 343-346, 350, 351, 353
- influence(s), 1, 11, 34, 35, 55, 64, 66-68, 79, 83, 91, 111, 133, 148, 172, 212, 215, 227, 233, 260, 269, 273, 274, 278, 289, 293, 294, 298, 302-304, 307, 325, 331, 332, 341, 342, 349,
- information, 1, 4, 82, 90, 130, 150, 154, 172, 176, 210, 228, 234, 236, 237, 274, 292, 297, 303, 348, 349
- injustice(s), 5, 28, 29, 51, 73, 74, 83, 84, 114, 116, 125, 141, 155, 159, 160, 164, 167, 179, 182, 305, 306, 308, 309, 335, 340
- innovator(s), 5
- inquir(ies), 69, 145, 208, 216, 224, 236, 269, 270, 303, 306, 350
- inspiration, 48, 69, 127, 142, 162, 178, 192, 215, 247, 270, 277, 283, 290, 297, 300, 313, 342, 350, 352
- institution(s), 2, 10, 12, 16, 18, 28, 29, 50, 55, 60, 65, 73, 84, 90, 92, 110, 117, 127, 137, 169, 178, 197, 198, 202, 206, 208, 215, 219, 221, 226, 227, 229-231, 239, 260, 262, 273, 276, 277, 279, 284, 286, 289, 305, 319, 345, 346, 349, 353, 354
- instruction, 268, 330, 336
- intellectual, 34, 55, 66, 117, 148, 208, 211, 221, 224, 254, 257, 268, 289, 293, 303
- interaction(s), 51, 56, 76, 111, 117, 127, 147, 275, 284, 331,
- international, 16, 27, 39, 47, 59, 61, 67, 68, 71-73, 80, 90, 91, 116, 123, 124, 132, 140, 158, 192, 197, 207, 222, 224, 225, 227, 230, 231, 250, 251, 259, 261, 280, 284, 286, 288, 319, 323, 327, 332, 340, 343,
- interpretation(s), 17, 18, 22, 34, 40, 55, 60, 61, 69, 121, 147, 170, 190, 193, 207, 281, 283, 294, 295, 307, 335, 336
- intersection(s), 35, 83, 116, 123, 133, 134, 194, 205, 207, 224, 231, 254, 260, 269, 270, 289, 294, 350, 354
- interview(s), 5, 20, 23, 26, 29, 31, 45, 46, 54, 72, 82, 114, 117, 130, 132, 136, 138, 139, 150, 157, 163, 175-178, 180-182, 208, 210, 211, 213, 251, 252, 260, 278, 281, 284, 298, 303, 304, 325, 326, 332, 334, 340,
- invitation(s), 3, 138, 140, 154, 202, 219, 228, 244, 275, 281, 301, 325

Islam, 254, 255, 257

J

Jamaica, 316, 319, 325, 326, 329, 330, 332,
 Jesus Christ (see Jesus), 12, 22, 29, 56, 62,
 83-86, 95, 137, 141, 142, 164, 165, 191,
 193, 218, 245, 284, 285, 297, 307, 319,
 321, 322, 335-337
 Journey(s), 4, 5, 8, 9, 26, 32, 33, 39, 44, 47,
 49, 54-56, 72, 79, 80, 84, 90, 113, 117,
 118, 120, 127, 136, 142, 145-149, 157,
 160, 161, 164, 165, 175-177, 185, 187,
 188, 191, 192, 197, 202, 204, 210, 211,
 215, 217-219, 223, 224, 227, 233, 234,
 240, 247, 248, 252-254, 257, 259-262,
 268, 273, 274, 276, 277, 279, 280, 282,
 283, 288, 289, 298-301, 304, 313, 334,
 342, 343, 345, 349, 352
 justice, 3, 16-18, 29, 37, 38, 47, 64, 66, 67,
 69, 72, 74, 82, 84, 85, 90, 92, 116, 117,
 120, 124, 126-128, 132, 133, 141, 156,
 15-167, 172, 175, 194, 221, 222, 233,
 234, 240, 247, 248, 252, 257, 259, 260,
 262, 269-271, 286, 289, 290, 306, 310,
 341, 342, 344, 347, 351
 juxtaposition, 216, 313

K

Kenya, 4, 15-17, 20-22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31,
 44-48, 59, 62, 64-69, 72, 74, 76-80, 111,
 131, 192, 197, 206, 230, 250, 251, 287
 kingdom, 32, 45, 49, 86, 141, 266, 310, 350,
 Kisumu, 44, 77, 78,
 knowledge, 1, 3-6, 10, 12, 18, 21, 33, 44, 50,
 51, 53, 56, 60, 76, 84, 92, 115, 116, 118,
 121-123, 132, 133, 141, 142, 161, 162,
 169, 171, 173, 178, 198, 207, 225, 228,
 248, 249, 260, 269, 274, 279, 295, 301,
 316, 349, 353, 354,
 Kwame Nkrumah, 213,

L

Landscape(s), 17, 35, 41, 66, 72, 73, 78, 122,
 194, 196, 219, 257, 230, 236, 239, 240,
 283, 285, 284, 306, 334, 348, 349,

Language(s), 28, 33, 80, 111, 112, 145-147,
 158, 205, 226, 293, 301, 330, 331, 336,
 leader(s), 12, 18, 38, 46, 47, 50, 59, 64, 66,
 67, 92, 112, 120, 123, 125, 139, 155,
 165, 170, 171, 187, 206, 207, 213, 219,
 226, 248, 256, 259, 260-262, 281, 282,
 308, 322, 347
 leadership, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15-18, 21, 27-
 29, 32, 37, 39-41, 47-49, 51, 55, 60, 61,
 64, 66-69, 78, 113, 126, 127, 131-134,
 141-143, 149, 155-162, 164-167, 170-
 173, 181, 184, 191, 193, 196, 201, 206,
 207, 216, 218, 219, 224, 225, 227, 230,
 233, 234, 236, 238, 239, 240, 244, 247,
 248, 249, 250, 252, 259-262, 269, 271,
 274, 282, 284, 286, 289, 292, 302, 308,
 309, 314, 315, 319, 320, 326, 328, 339,
 341, 342, 344, 345, 353
 lecturer(s), 6, 44, 45, 54, 67, 120, 122, 142,
 146, 179, 182, 191, 192, 230, 254, 255,
 257, 269, 300, 315, 328, 329
 legacy, 5, 10, 20, 21, 22, 64-67, 73, 74, 90-
 93, 96, 106, 107, 127, 131, 132, 167,
 170, 171, 190, 192, 194, 200, 202, 210,
 215, 218, 219, 222, 224, 227, 234-236,
 240, 247, 248, 252, 257, 259, 262, 266,
 267, 269, 279, 276, 283, 288, 289, 290,
 302, 334, 337, 339, 341, 346, 347, 349,
 350, 351
 legend, 15, 339, 341
 Legon, 8, 16, 54, 60, 82, 95, 145, 146, 148,
 198, 200, 202, 204, 205, 212, 228, 246,
 256, 259, 260-262, 278, 280, 281, 288,
 299, 300
 Lens(es), 21, 29, 33, 34, 58, 61, 82, 85, 114,
 130, 138, 190, 270, 316
 Lesotho, 82, 83, 151, 152, 153, 154
 Lesson(s), 76, 90, 91, 114, 126, 162, 242,
 246, 276, 277, 282, 283, 298, 301, 342
 LGBTQIA+, 124
 liberation, 3, 4, 9, 22, 28, 29, 32, 38, 40, 50,
 60, 62, 83, 84, 85, 96, 110, 116, 118, 125,
 126, 161, 180, 184, 186, 221, 222, 236-
 240, 248, 251-257, 260, 273, 291-294,
 306, 307, 308, 309, 315, 317, 318, 320-
 323, 335-337
 liberator, 30, 33, 61, 83, 99, 251, 313

- life, 2-5, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 20-22, 27, 31, 34, 37-42, 46-49, 52, 53, 56, 57, 60, 65, 72, 73, 74, 76, 80, 82, 84, 85, 90, 91, 95, 96, 98, 100, 106, 109, 110, 113-115, 118, 120, 121, 124-128, 130, 134, 136, 139-142, 146, 147, 150-157, 159, 166, 169, 170, 173, 175, 176, 181, 184-188, 190, 191, 194, 197, 200, 201, 205, 210, 214, 215, 217, 219, 221, 224-229, 231-233, 236-240, 242, 245-249, 251, 251, 259, 262-268, 274, 276-278, 281, 282, 284, 285, 287-293, 295, 298, 300, 301, 303, 304, 307, 309, 310, 313, 315, 322, 323, 325, 327, 329, 334-337, 340, 342-345, 349, 353
- linguistic(s), 15, 304
- literature, 32, 73, 104, 120, 130, 136, 140, 146, 147, 169, 170, 191, 207, 261, 317, 354
- local, 6, 12, 18, 22, 39, 47, 78, 112, 123, 140, 153, 158, 172, 190, 201, 202, 212, 213, 326, 327-329, 331
- Lord, 40, 54, 56, 62, 65, 68, 95, 98, 91, 102-104, 106, 107, 137, 166, 238, 246, 261, 279, 294, 297, 326
- love, 3, 18, 34, 37, 57, 92, 97, 101-103, 106, 128, 146, 147, 151, 153, 154, 156, 157, 177, 185, 187, 213, 224-226, 245, 259-261, 263, 264, 267, 285, 292, 310, 313, 316
- Luanda, 109-112
- Lusaka, 131
- ## M
- Malawi, 4, 120-124, 169-172
- male, 22, 31, 32, 44, 45, 55, 60, 61, 74, 104, 123, 125-127, 131, 138, 139, 141, 142, 163-165, 167, 170-173, 178, 179, 182, 185, 187, 192, 211, 237, 244-247, 266, 269, 275, 282, 286, 291, 293-295, 297, 301, 305, 308, 321, 322, 331, 336, 352, 354
- man/men, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 28, 33, 34, 37, 38, 40, 41, 47, 45, 53-58, 60-62, 68, 73, 79, 100, 102, 104, 124-128, 133, 136, 139, 140-142, 147-149, 160-166, 170-172, 179, 185-187, 193, 217, 231, 238, 244, 245, 251, 264, 266, 274, 275, 281, 282, 294, 303, 305, 307-310, 320-323, 327, 328, 331, 334, 335, 336
- management, 3, 51, 26, 79, 158, 165, 346
- manager(s), 112, 201, 202, 340
- manifestation(s), 162, 204, 264
- marginalisation, 2, 5, 16, 65, 83, 84, 123, 138, 142, 165, 170, 171, 173, 181, 269, 270, 294, 305, 307, 318, 322, 340
- marketplace, 62
- market(s), 210, 213, 343
- marriage(s), 29, 45, 56, 57, 77, 121, 122, 152, 163, 164, 179, 210, 211, 293, 299, 305, 237, 336, 337, 342, 343, 345, 346
- masculinit(ies), 3, 292
- maternal, 38, 121, 131, 197, 205, 279, 306
- maternity, 345, 346
- matriarch(s), 1, 4, 14, 27, 30, 31, 33, 35, 37, 38, 39-41, 47, 48, 52, 69, 71, 74, 76, 80, 82, 88, 89, 104, 107, 109, 118, 136, 139, 142, 146, 150, 154, 165, 167, 169, 175, 179, 182, 184, 187, 188, 197, 198, 200, 204, 208, 219, 233, 234, 237, 240, 242, 268, 273, 278, 292, 297, 303, 310, 334, 337, 348, 349, 350
- maturity, 45, 201
- media, 134, 141, 184, 243, 285, 284, 331, 336
- medicine, 50, 51
- meeting(s), 1, 6, 11, 17, 46, 50, 54, 117, 133, 134, 154, 155, 157, 170, 171, 180, 182, 184, 187, 188, 197, 202, 206, 211, 219, 228, 234, 242, 244, 245, 250, 276, 286, 310, 323, 332, 349
- member, 16, 21, 26, 27, 29, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 50, 55, 58, 64, 65, 60, 71, 73, 78, 79, 82, 83, 88, 90, 96, 110, 114, 115, 117, 123, 125, 127, 130, 131, 137, 140-142, 145, 149, 153-159, 161, 163, 170, 171, 178, 180, 190, 192, 197, 198, 200, 202, 205-207, 210, 212, 213, 217, 218, 221, 222, 226-228, 230, 231, 233-237, 244, 246-248, 250, 252, 254-256, 259, 261, 262, 268, 269, 274, 278, 281, 283, 284, 286, 287, 291, 293, 295, 303, 313, 315, 316, 325, 331, 334, 335, 340, 343, 344, 348, 353, 354

memory, 30, 31, 33, 96, 150, 162, 176, 185, 227, 228, 326, 328

mentor(s), 4, 12, 23, 124, 175, 197, 205, 228, 237, 255, 257, 325, 328, 330, 330, 352, 353, 354

mentorship, 12, 47, 61, 124, 127, 131, 142, 148, 178, 207, 260, 289, 290, 326, 331, 353, 354

merchant, 146, 211

Messiah, 100

Methodist Church, 64-69, 131, 137, 177, 217, 224, 226, 227, 237, 259, 262, 373-277, 288, 290, 297

methodology, 9, 130, 136, 150, 160, 176, 178, 182, 284

method(s), 9, 34, 56, 73, 121, 146, 162, 176, 205, 206, 264, 284, 291, 316, 332, 354

midwife, 27, 97, 133, 279

milestone(s), 6, 44, 45, 49, 80, 134, 204, 215, 254, 299, 313

military, 186

mind(s), 3, 92, 93, 114, 149, 153, 177, 180, 185, 227, 329

mindset(s), 8, 181, 350

minister(s), 8, 27, 28, 46, 57, 64-68, 109, 126, 128, 137-139, 140-142, 152-154, 161, 165, 171, 175, 177-179, 181, 182, 194, 206, 212, 218, 225, 242-244, 246-249, 252, 263, 264, 275, 279, 280, 281, 299, 300, 319, 326, 329, 331

ministry, 22, 26, 29, 44-47, 49, 50, 53-57, 64, 65, 68, 88, 89, 91, 96, 110, 114, 117, 123, 137, 141, 147, 150-153, 161-163, 166, 167, 172, 175, 178, 180-182, 184, 187, 194, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222, 225, 226, 230, 242, 244, 245, 248, 274-277, 279-282, 284, 287-289, 299-302, 305, 316, 319, 320, 325-331, 339, 342,

mission, 24, 35, 45, 47, 48, 58, 64-68, 79, 111, 115, 126, 130, 131, 134, 139-141, 145, 151, 158, 159, 162, 170, 172, 176, 201, 205, 214, 228, 230, 231, 236, 238, 251, 257, 259, 262, 264, 266-279, 286, 301, 307, 309, 310, 328, 330, 336, 340, 342

missionar(ies), 20, 22, 27, 29, 61, 109, 111, 115, 137, 160, 170, 200, 202, 225, 226, 229, 243, 249, 263, 292, 298, 301, 335

model(s), 2, 3, 33, 57, 64, 85, 178, 194, 219, 229, 238, 276, 287, 291, 294, 321, 328, 336, 342

morality, 268-270, 343

mother(s), 2-4, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 21, 26, 34, 59, 74, 76, 78, 80, 83, 91, 93, 96, 98, 110, 115, 118, 121, 122, 131, 138, 141, 145, 150-152, 154, 163-165, 177, 178, 180, 185, 187, 190, 192, 197, 201, 204, 210, 211, 218, 222, 226, 229, 243, 245, 249, 251, 260, 279, 288-293, 297, 298, 313, 318, 332, 334, 335, 343, 353

mothering, 2-4, 155, 352

motion, 4, 352

motivation, 46, 91, 181, 310

movement(s), 15, 18, 41, 64, 65, 111, 116, 114, 117, 124, 153, 154, 161, 206, 221, 259-261, 283, 293, 303, 314, 321, 351

Muslim(s), 79, 255, 265

mutilation, 29, 305

N

Nairobi, 15, 17, 21, 23, 32, 44, 59, 77, 111, 112, 131, 132, 281, 287

name(s), 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 15, 33, 38, 60, 65, 68, 73, 88, 94, 104, 106, 117, 145, 162, 169, 176, 184, 185, 191, 197, 204, 207, 211, 213, 231, 245, 255, 264, 298, 332

narrative(s), 9, 22, 44, 47, 74, 85, 126, 130, 142, 145, 146, 149, 160, 163, 176, 193, 196, 224, 236, 278, 281-284, 289, 293, 342, 334, 349, 350

nation(s), 38, 39, 51, 68, 74, 92, 124, 176, 180, 182, 200, 224, 226, 227, 230, 231, 234, 261, 265, 303, 305, 320, 336, 346

nature, 4, 46, 116, 121, 127, 134, 148, 151, 180, 191, 256, 265, 271, 309, 317, 354

Nelson Mandela, 117, 122

neocolonialism, 22

network(s), 18, 50, 64, 69, 116, 124, 132, 226, 231, 270, 286, 301, 304, 330, 352, 354

Nigeria, 16, 23, 59, 94, 192, 197, 222, 228-231, 238, 250, 273-277, 284-287, 300, 301

nomination, 40, 206, 213

norm(s), 32, 54, 60, 67, 79, 83, 85, 100, 109, 170, 194, 232, 255, 264, 269, 271, 283,

289, 295, 302, 305, 306, 330, 334, 346,
350, 351
nuance(s), 244, 318, 326
nun(s), 20-24, 190, 192, 280, 327
nurture, 2, 4, 126, 127, 335

O

obligation(s), 216
obscurity, 169, 173, 197
obstacle(s), 5, 11, 33, 37, 46, 65, 234, 237,
301, 309
occasion, 115, 153, 326
occupations, 211
omnipotence, 274
opportunit(ies), 21, 22, 31, 32, 35, 41, 56,
68, 73, 90, 109, 117, 118, 157, 184, 201,
211, 214, 218, 238, 243, 249, 250, 251,
256, 261, 266, 273, 274, 280, 329, 336,
343, 346, 351
oppression(s), 2, 9, 15, 29, 35, 55, 56, 83, 85,
115, 125-127, 133, 157, 162, 181, 186,
221, 251, 264, 294, 295, 308, 315, 318,
321-323, 329, 334, 337
orchestra, 15
ordination, 27-30, 44-46, 54, 55, 65, 68, 117,
123, 160, 161, 163, 169-173, 177, 185,
187, 213, 215, 218, 238, 239, 247, 263,
273, 275-277, 279, 314, 350
organisation(s), 9, 11, 16, 18, 34, 35, 39, 47,
50, 51, 64, 67, 72, 90-92, 115, 116, 131,
132, 134, 156, 157, 165, 177, 196, 200,
216, 219, 221-225, 227, 229, 230, 234,
237, 249, 250, 257, 259, 260, 262, 269,
286, 301, 304, 306, 320, 340, 343, 346,
353
organiser(s), 59, 198, 213, 330
orientation, 32, 50, 85, 127, 255, 269, 270,
307,
orthopraxy, 68
overcomer, 263

P

pacesetter, 242
pandemic(s), 9, 50, 51, 158, 187, 208, 253,
254, 266,
paradigm(s), 9, 58, 141, 193, 233, 239, 269,
295, 308, 350

parents, 20, 31, 32, 33, 45, 54, 76, 109, 115,
121, 137, 141, 145, 151, 153, 163, 177,
178, 184, 185, 186, 200, 210, 211, 224,
226, 229, 254, 255, 298, 313, 326, 346
parish(es), 27, 28, 45, 54, 152, 153, 160, 85,
186
participation, 5, 10, 11, 40, 50, 54, 59, 61,
66, 79, 83, 96, 114, 117, 124, 125, 133,
134, 136, 142, 155, 157, 159, 169, 170,
175, 177, 192, 202, 204, 206, 214, 215,
227, 234, 237-240, 244, 245, 247, 255,
257, 260, 262, 263, 266, 267, 269, 275-
277, 280, 284, 286, 287, 292, 293, 301,
306, 315, 337, 342, 348, 349, 350
partnerships, 34, 132, 161, 163, 289, 290,
346, 347, 352
pastor(s), 22, 53-55, 57, 64, 66-68, 79, 109,
112, 170-173, 185, 187, 188, 194, 218,
238, 239, 245, 248-250, 252, 279, 280,
302, 304, 314, 320, 321, 326, 327, 331,
349,
patriarchy, 3, 26, 28, 38, 40, 116, 126, 140,
161, 162, 164-166, 172, 173, 238, 239,
244, 297, 307, 308, 320, 336
peace, 28, 35, 71-74, 100, 120, 128, 230,
231, 240, 244, 254, 256, 270, 285-287,
310, 326, 332, 339, 340, 342, 344,
pedagogy, 120, 121, 126, 239,
people(s), 3, 5, 16-18, 23, 28, 33, 38, 39, 45,
47, 53, 55-57, 61, 62, 64, 68, 83, 85, 92,
111, 114, 116, 121, 124-127, 128, 139,
140, 142, 145, 151, 164, 166, 171, 176,
178, 179, 180, 184, 186, 188, 193, 198,
205, 214, 225, 226, 237, 238, 251, 261,
264, 270, 288, 292, 295, 307, 308, 310,
316, 318, 321, 322, 326, 329, 330, 332,
343,
perception(s), 21, 147, 172, 270, 287, 301,
327,
perpetrators, 74
perseverance, 39, 56, 65, 84, 288, 289, 290,
341
person(s), 2, 3, 29, 31, 53-56, 115, 116, 198,
204, 217, 219, 252, 255, 256, 291, 306,
308, 315, 325, 327, 328, 329
personality, 180, 214, 250, 252
perspective(s), 12, 26, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38,
40, 41, 44, 46, 47, 51, 55, 56, 61, 73, 74,

- 82-84, 122, 126, 130, 133, 141, 146-148, 169, 176, 192, 193, 194, 221, 236, 238, 254, 255, 257, 269, 270, 276, 278, 281, 282, 291, 293, 294, 301, 302, 305, 315, 316, 319, 322, 324, 330, 331, 335, 346, 353
- phenomenology, 121,
- philosoph(ies), 21, 22, 58, 120, 161, 162, 191, 192, 197, 205, 222, 254, 255, 285,
- pioneer(s), 4-6, 29, 31, 33, 44, 45, 50, 54, 73, 74, 92, 97, 104, 110, 118, 150, 154, 169, 188, 204, 210, 228, 240, 246, 282, 291, 292, 306, 342, 345, 349, 350, 352, 354
- platform(s), 3, 56, 60, 126, 157, 192, 222, 254, 257, 262, 269, 287, 301, 302, 328,
- poem(s), 5, 27, 72, 80, 82, 85, 90, 91, 94, 96-100, 102, 104, 106, 170, 198, 297,
- polic(ies), 35, 61, 141, 179, 343
- political, 3, 5, 15, 37-41, 66, 67, 112, 116, 120, 122, 162, 180, 186, 187, 210, 213, 215, 217, 232, 234, 251, 270, 285, 292, 307, 309, 350, 354
- polygamy, 305
- population(s), 24, 115, 153, 225, 256, 336, 346, 354,
- position(s), 2, 6, 8, 12, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 32, 37, 40, 41, 45, 46, 54, 55, 61, 64, 66, 68, 78, 112, 121, 123, 124, 131, 139, 140-143, 147, 155, 156, 159, 160, 164, 170-173, 181, 190, 191, 212-214, 217, 218, 225, 229, 230, 239, 244, 246, 256, 264-266, 273-275, 280, 286, 304-306, 310, 314, 329, 331, 334, 339, 342, 345, 349, 354
- posthumous, 191
- poverty, 2, 3, 28, 153, 158, 305, 309
- power(s), 9, 17, 18, 24, 29, 32, 33, 38, 41, 51, 56, 83, 90, 102, 107, 116, 126, 128, 142, 143, 154, 155, 162, 165, 166, 171-173, 187, 203, 207, 215, 239, 240, 253, 257, 260, 265, 277, 282, 294, 303, 336, 341, 343, 351,
- practice(s), 2, 11, 26, 31, 33, 55, 61, 66, 83-85, 109, 121, 126, 148, 149, 173, 177, 179, 194, 198, 205, 207, 232, 236, 260, 264-267, 269, 270, 285, 292, 293, 295, 305, 307, 313, 319, 322, 335, 351
- practitioners, 142, 204
- prayer(s), 5, 68, 78, 79, 98, 102, 106, 113, 121, 126, 128, 153, 172, 182, 222, 226, 261, 297, 308, 335, 336,
- preacher(s), 65, 80, 281, 321, 325
- predecessor, 4, 326
- prejudice(s), 26, 66, 100, 165, 169, 231, 313, 323
- priest(s), 10, 23, 24, 45, 49, 194, 218, 286
- primary, 28, 39, 44, 46, 53, 57, 77, 92, 109-111, 113, 130, 131, 145, 150-153, 156, 162, 177, 185, 192, 201, 202, 211-213, 222, 224, 229, 243, 249, 252, 261, 264, 273, 274, 276, 280, 285, 293, 299, 300, 304, 306, 318,
- principal, 45, 46, 78, 280, 299, 354
- principle(s), 2, 23, 54, 56, 61, 85, 90-92, 114, 126, 127, 147, 155, 157, 159, 161, 162, 164, 193, 208, 219, 251, 264, 287, 301, 313, 336, 343, 347, 353,
- privilege(s), 39, 68, 126, 172, 176, 227, 274, 304, 336,
- professor(s)
- progenitor(s), 197, 216
- programme(s), 56, 78, 110, 123-125, 131-133, 139, 147, 158, 177, 197, 202, 207, 212, 224, 225, 227, 229, 230, 256, 259, 261, 265, 266, 279, 280, 284, 286, 288, 289, 290, 299, 300, 315, 328, 329, 331, 340, 342, 343,
- promotion, 3, 18, 21, 109, 130, 194, 269, 308, 342
- prophecy, 94, 95
- prophetic, 3, 29, 34, 166, 318
- psychology, 91, 205, 206, 208,
- public, 1, 22, 35, 40, 41, 57, 72, 109, 120, 124, 140, 170, 180, 198, 214, 216, 219, 225, 239, 286, 313, 318, 329,
- publication(s), 9, 10, 16-18, 33, 57, 73, 74, 117, 124, 130, 134, 136, 141, 146, 158, 169, 190, 193, 198, 204, 207, 222, 231, 232, 235, 246, 250, 268, 269, 270, 293, 301, 317, 319, 330, 334, 335, 337, 343, 353,
- Q**
- qualification(s), 21, 77, 111, 156, 192, 212, 215, 335,

R

racism, 15, 35, 73, 116, 126, 184, 186, 313, 321, 326,
 rape, 123, 305, 310, 340,
 reality, 2, 24, 60, 115, 116, 149, 198, 212, 240, 295, 310, 321, 323, 354
 realm(s), 49, 97, 100, 147, 156, 194, 216, 224, 227, 248, 233, 248, 252, 287, 294, 305, 341, 346, 350,
 recognition, 1, 6, 10, 44, 55, 84, 124, 128, 147, 177, 197, 198, 208, 211, 212, 226, 263, 264, 266, 267, 289, 295, 318, 319, 336, 340, 349, 350
 reflection(s), 5, 9, 40, 47, 55, 84, 85, 91, 114, 121, 131, 136, 146, 149, 161, 173, 176, 191, 193, 204, 221, 234, 242, 268, 271, 273, 283, 306-309, 325, 350,
 refuge(es), 28, 39, 41, 73, 141, 310
 region(s), 11, 16, 44, 53, 59, 91, 139, 151, 155, 156, 205, 216, 217, 219, 225, 229, 239, 242, 243, 248, 249, 252, 279, 298, 299, 328, 330, 352,
 rejection, 187, 270
 relation, 55, 73, 158, 327, 330
 relationship(s), 2, 3, 11, 16, 51, 54, 79, 84, 85, 112, 115, 122, 146, 171, 179, 180, 210, 255, 260, 265, 281, 282, 289, 307, 308, 324, 325, 336, 343
 religion(s), 2, 5, 8-10, 12, 15-17, 21, 22, 27, 32-35, 38, 39, 47, 49, 59, 61, 62, 72-74, 112, 116, 120, 122-125, 127, 133, 141, 147, 152, 159, 169, 192, 194, 197, 198, 205-208, 221, 231, 235, 242, 248, 249, 254-257, 260, 268-271, 273, 278, 289, 281, 282, 284, 289, 293, 294, 314, 315, 317, 319-321, 323, 335, 353, 354,
 representative(s), 88, 123, 130, 165, 172, 207, 214, 222, 244, 247, 330, 345, 350
 research, 2, 9, 11, 16, 17, 23, 24, 32, 33, 34, 50, 57, 59, 60, 61, 72, 73, 120, 121, 130, 136, 140, 141, 146, 148, 151, 159, 160, 162, 165, 169, 172, 175, 194, 197, 204, 205, 207, 231, 237, 249, 250, 254, 256, 257, 268, 269, 270, 273, 284, 287, 301, 307, 315, 319, 334, 335, 349, 354
 researcher(s), 2, 12, 15, 17, 51, 71-73, 121, 124, 134, 192, 291, 354

resilience, 29, 30, 38, 39, 46, 47, 56, 69, 79, 90, 91, 116, 118, 134, 142, 193, 202, 210, 211, 233, 247, 252, 276, 277, 282, 283, 290, 301, 339, 342, 343, 348, 350, 351
 resistance, 10, 22, 28, 44, 46, 79, 83, 162, 166, 173, 301, 335, 350
 resource(s), 2, 29, 47, 50, 59, 68, 140, 158, 159, 202, 208, 219, 286, 305, 306, 343, 353
 responsibilities, 2, 5, 9, 28, 32, 51, 57, 76, 114, 116, 133, 172, 178, 187, 191, 192, 197, 213, 216, 218, 222, 226, 249, 251, 274, 275, 276, 310, 335, 336, 342, 343, 344,
 retirement, 131, 201, 213, 215, 226, 275, 304
 right(s), 4, 10, 16, 22, 24, 29, 32, 38, 40, 49, 50, 51, 57, 61, 65-67, 69, 96, 114, 134, 137, 155, 156, 162, 166, 175, 180, 181, 194, 221, 223, 227, 246, 248, 250-253, 259, 260, 262, 264, 266, 267, 269, 282, 283, 289, 302, 308, 314, 321, 329, 339, 340-343, 352
 ritual(s), 2, 3, 12, 15, 17, 194, 217, 265, 292, 295, 354
 Roman Catholic, 20, 137, 190, 192, 285
 Rome, 23, 191, 285, 286,
 rural, 65, 109, 115, 147, 152, 153, 154, 156, 185, 243,
 Russia, 213
 Rwanda, 71-74, 251,

S

sacraments, 26, 29, 44, 55, 68, 138, 140, 142, 163, 206, 327, 137, 275
 sacrifice, 140, 224, 303, 336, 340
 salvation, 23, 53, 64, 85, 141, 218, 308, 89,
 Sankofa, 1, 37, 38, 41, 72, 74, 88, 200, 204, 242, 291, 353,
 scholar, 20, 23, 24, 28, 31, 71, 72, 74, 117, 120, 123, 127, 193, 205, 229, 230, 257, 314, 315, 317, 319,
 scholarship(s), 3, 5, 12, 18, 78, 110, 111, 117, 120, 122-124, 127-128, 147-149, 152, 179, 179, 222, 225, 227, 231, 233, 249, 252, 257, 269, 280, 283, 294, 295, 303, 318, 321, 323,
 school(s), 6, 15, 21, 23, 28, 39, 44, 45, 49, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 72, 77, 78, 90, 92,

- 102, 110-112, 115, 120, 122-126, 126, 131, 137, 145-147, 151-153, 156, 162, 177, 185, 190-192, 201, 202, 205, 209, 211-214, 217, 218, 222, 224-226, 227, 243, 245, 249, 252, 259, 261, 262, 269, 274, 279, 280, 285, 288, 299, 300, 313-315, 318, 319, 326, 327, 330, 340, 345, scripture(s), 11, 17, 22, 34, 56, 83, 85, 224, 225, 238, 256, 336, 350
- secondary, 21, 28, 39, 45, 53, 54, 77, 90, 110, 131, 136, 137, 145, 162, 170, 177, 190, 191, 192, 212, 222, 224, 229, 249, 261, 269, 279, 280, 285, 299, 300, 304, 327
- segregation, 115, 313
- selfless, 96, 204, 213, 225, 242, 265,
- separations, 126
- sermons, 206, 246, 274-276, 279
- servant(s), 12, 67, 166, 184, 225, 322, 326, 341,
- servanthood, 322, 323,
- service(s), 20, 29, 31, 45, 49, 51, 54, 56, 58, 78, 90, 118, 126, 130, 131, 137, 145, 152, 157, 167, 77, 200, 202, 210, 212-213, 218, 219, 222, 224-227, 230, 239, 249-251, 259, 260, 262, 264, 266, 267, 279, 286, 288, 289, 290, 300, 302, 304, 307, 319, 320, 322, 325,
- setting(s), 35, 84, 133, 142, 190, 193, 229, 239, 245, 285, 319, 354,
- sexism, 3, 35, 126, 184, 231, 237, 239, 293, 294, 321, 323
- sexist, 22
- shelter, 91, 166, 167, 335
- Sheroism, 37-41
- shoulders, 5, 114, 118,
- sibling(s), 8, 20, 45, 76, 90, 97, 113, 131, 137, 145, 151, 184, 186, 218, 260, 298, 299, 313
- sisterhood(s), 21, 59, 116, 306,
- skill(s), 16, 18, 21, 28, 32, 41, 68, 78, 92, 111, 112, 115, 116, 153, 172, 177, 181, 188, 201, 202, 216, 225, 265, 353
- slavery, 22, 313
- social, 3-5, 10, 16, 28, 29, 38, 39, 47, 53, 64, 66-69, 72-74, 76, 82, 84, 85, 90, 91, 112, 115-117, 120, 122, 126-128, 131, 132, 134, 138, 141, 147, 148, 156, 159, 170, 181, 182, 184, 194, 198, 205, 213, 217, 219, 221-223, 228, 231, 232-234, 240, 248, 251-253, 257, 259-262, 267, 269-271, 274, 285, 287, 289, 290, 293-295, 306, 307, 309, 314, 316, 319, 331, 335, 339, 341, 342, 343, 345-351, 354
- societ(ies), 3, 4, 8, 16, 22-24, 28, 29, 31-35, 37-39, 45, 47, 50, 51, 60, 61, 66, 73, 76, 79, 80, 85, 90-92, 110, 114, 116, 121, 122, 123, 126, 128, 131, 134, 138, 140, 141, 146, 148, 150, 155, 159, 161, 163, 165, 169-173, 176, 181, 184, 192, 193, 194, 202, 203, 205, 207, 212, 213, 215-217, 220, 222, 229, 230, 231, 237, 239, 251, 253-255, 260, 261, 264, 265, 267, 268, 270, 271, 273, 276, 282, 284-286, 292-294, 305, 306, 309, 310, 313, 315, 316, 318-324, 330, 334-336, 340, 342, 343, 346, 347, 351
- sociologist, 134
- soldiers, 186,
- solidarity, 8, 11, 15, 22, 114, 115, 117, 132, 133, 158, 162, 237, 239, 240, 235, 301, 308, 322, 323,
- South Africa, 16, 21, 59, 72, 114-117, 122, 125, 126, 139, 155, 156, 158, 158, 170, 178, 192, 197, 226, 230,
- space(s), 1-6, 9-12, 11, 16-18, 26, 32, 34, 40, 53, 57, 69, 73, 74, 100, 104, 117, 121, 126, 134, 148, 155, 161, 162, 164, 172, 180, 181, 187, 217, 219, 244, 247, 250, 253, 259, 264-266, 273, 277, 283, 305, 316, 328-331, 348, 349, 353, 354
- sphere(s), 6, 55, 84, 125, 130, 188, 194, 198, 202, 212, 215, 216, 219, 221, 228, 234, 236, 237, 248, 249, 251, 252, 254, 282, 289, 293, 295, 302, 305, 309, 323, 344, 346, 350, 352
- spirit, 3, 18, 29, 32, 37-40, 47, 48, 55, 57, 58, 74, 80, 95, 102, 107, 157, 202, 207, 225, 233, 239, 240, 247, 284, 308, 336, 342, 344, 350, 351,
- spirituality, 76, 83, 128, 157, 229, 231, 249, 251, 252, 287, 303, 323, 354
- stagnation, 133
- standard(s), 56, 69, 201, 211, 250, 261, 354
- star(s), 4, 5, 15, 16, 18, 24, 37, 47, 48, 90, 92, 98, 291, 295, 353

- stereotypes, 26, 46, 64, 115, 134, 141, 196, 246, 247, 327, 331
 stigmatisation, 51, 138, 231, 294, 308,
 stor(ies), 9, 33, 41, 44, 45, 47, 60, 80, 104, 110, 114, 146, 148, 155, 162, 175, 184, 204, 210, 215, 248, 263, 265, 275, 278, 284, 291, 303, 343
 storytelling, 9, 64, 126, 130, 136, 142, 146, 162, 172,
 strateg(ies), 17, 35, 47, 61, 71, 85, 132, 162, 190, 234, 260, 306, 315
 strength, 5, 98, 99, 102, 106, 107, 126, 154, 175, 185, 233, 282, 285, 301
 structure(s), 31, 38, 39, 60, 61, 73, 79, 85, 133, 160, 161, 164, 165, 167, 169, 175, 205, 221, 236, 238, 239, 246, 247, 250, 269, 294, 306, 322, 336, 340, 347, 351,
 struggle, 5, 15, 18, 35, 38, 39, 46, 56, 58, 83, 84, 107, 114, 123, 132, 134, 142, 146, 148, 154, 158, 160-162, 165, 166, 184, 186, 232, 245-247, 250, 251, 265, 271, 306, 318, 322, 323, 335,
 student(s), 15, 21, 23, 27, 44, 50, 78, 110, 111, 121, 123, 125-127, 131, 137, 147, 148, 178-180, 182, 185, 186, 192, 196, 197, 204, 206, 207, 212, 215, 217, 225, 227-229, 230, 231, 243, 259, 261, 280, 282, 299, 327, 330, 331, 342,
 subject(s), 20, 28, 41, 65, 73, 76, 196, 176, 191, 309, 326,
 subordination, 41, 170, 281, 322
 superintendent, 68, 263, 264, 266,
 supporter, 281, 318
 Sweden, 71, 72
 Switzerland, 45, 111, 118, 122, 124, 206, 230,
 syllabus, 125
 system(s), 33, 35, 38, 74, 77, 85, 115, 165, 169, 177, 214, 225, 243, 245, 250, 273, 281, 340, 345, 346,
 269, 279, 288, 289, 299, 300, 302, 314, 326, 329, 342
 technology, 47, 77, 178, 261, 285, 286, 354
 tenacity, 5, 18, 46
 tenure, 21, 45, 49, 78, 117, 125, 131, 133, 147, 192, 197, 201, 212, 222, 225, 227, 230, 257, 286
 tertiary, 151, 196, 197, 334
 testament, 5, 37, 64, 66, 67, 90, 109, 117, 122, 123, 143, 147, 148, 152, 159, 193, 202, 215, 234, 240, 253, 257, 276, 277, 283, 288, 289, 330, 337, 341, 342, 343, 347
 testimony(ies), 57, 68, 163, 207, 217, 331, 348-350
 text(s), 17, 22, 38, 40, 55, 83, 85, 126, 147, 148, 237, 273, 281, 283, 291-295, 330, 340
 theme(s), 1, 11, 12, 17, 18, 29, 83, 132, 148, 193, 205, 237, 279, 287, 316, 353
 theologian(s), 1-5, 8-12, 16, 21, 26-28, 31-35, 41, 46, 53, 54, 59, 60, 64-66, 69, 79, 82-84, 88, 90, 96, 97, 104, 105, 110, 117, 118, 120, 123, 125-127, 130, 132, 136, 137, 138, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148-150, 153-155, 157, 160, 161-163, 166, 169, 175, 180, 181, 185, 186, 190, 192, 196, 198, 200, 202, 204, 206, 210, 214, 216, 219, 221, 222, 226-228, 231, 233, 236, 237, 239, 242, 244, 246, 248, 250, 252-254, 259, 260, 266, 268-271, 273, 276-278, 281, 284, 286, 289, 290-295, 298, 300-304, 306, 307, 310, 315, 316, 320, 321, 323, 325, 327-332, 334, 339, 342, 343, 348-354
 theology, 3-6, 8-11, 15, 20, 21, 24, 26, 28-30, 34, 39, 44-50, 53-62, 65-68, 69, 73, 82-86, 96, 118, 120-124, 126, 127, 134, 136-138, 146-148, 152, 156-161, 163, 176, 185-187, 190, 192, 193, 205-208, 222, 226, 234-239, 242, 243, 248, 249, 252, 255, 256, 259, 260, 262, 263, 266, 267, 269, 271, 273, 274, 280, 291-294, 304-310, 314-329, 332, 335-337, 348, 352, 353
 theor(ies), 9, 17, 60, 231, 330, 332, 354
 theses, 306

topic(s), 22, 35, 67, 170, 172, 208, 266, 271, 317, 337
 tradition(s), 2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 69, 85, 106, 131, 136, 148, 162, 169, 176, 190, 193, 217, 257, 264, 270, 294, 298, 305, 307, 308, 309, 316, 322, 350
 trailblazer(s), 26, 30, 68, 184-186, 188, 191, 192, 230, 239, 247, 267, 271, 277, 314, 349
 training(s), 5, 41, 49, 50, 66, 77, 78, 90, 91, 111, 112, 115, 116, 122, 127, 131, 132, 134, 137, 140, 147, 152, 155, 156, 158-160, 169-172, 175, 177, 170, 182, 185, 186, 190-192, 194, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 217, 218, 224, 225, 229, 242-244, 247-249, 252, 261-266, 273, 275, 276, 279, 280, 281, 284-286, 288, 293, 299, 300, 319, 326, 329, 334, 339, 340
 traits, 76, 210, 292, 348
 trajectory, 2, 44, 78, 131, 136, 150, 196, 202, 211, 212, 221-223, 227, 229, 254, 259, 283, 304, 314, 337
 transformation(s), 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 28, 29, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 47, 48, 53, 56-58, 80, 84, 85, 110, 127, 141, 145, 148, 156, 165, 166, 180, 226, 237, 253, 254, 257, 260, 267, 268, 289, 290, 291, 308, 315, 337, 339, 345, 348-351, 354
 transformative, 28, 33, 34, 48, 55, 56, 61, 83, 85, 90, 125, 126, 176, 180, 203, 215, 227, 233, 234, 236, 239, 240, 253, 257, 260, 262, 268, 277, 283, 289, 290, 295, 298, 303, 318, 337, 342, 343, 345, 347, 349, 350, 351
 translator, 126, 222
 travellers, 330
 treasurer, 78, 213, 250, 252
 truth, 11, 107, 145, 282, 305, 306, 310, 337

U

ubuntu, 21, 39, 41,
 Uganda, 4, 20, 21, 49-51,
 Undergraduate(s), 6, 15, 121, 147, 178, 192, 197, 206, 229, 230, 231, 318,
 universit(ies), 8, 15, 21, 27, 32-34, 39, 44, 45, 49, 50, 54, 59, 65, 67, 68, 71-74, 77, 89, 91, 116, 117, 120, 122, 124, 125, 127, 128, 131, 137-139, 142, 145-148,

152, 153, 163, 175, 178-180, 186, 187, 191-193, 196, 197, 205, 207, 212, 222, 224, 225, 228-231, 248, 249, 254-257, 259, 261, 262, 268, 269, 274, 285, 288, 299, 300, 304, 314, 315, 319, 320, 340, 342,

urban, 39, 65, 109, 110, 156, 264,
 utopia, 308

V

vacancy, 112
 value(s), 23, 32, 49, 56, 61, 84, 90, 92, 121, 145, 147, 151, 152, 166, 173, 186, 210, 215, 225, 246, 251, 270, 284, 289, 290, 308, 343,
 victim(s), 73, 74, 138, 161, 165, 167, 340
 viewpoint(s), 69, 281, 314
 village(s), 2, 15, 22, 41, 50, 76, 80, 109, 110, 151, 184, 204
 vineyard, 238, 261
 violence, 28, 29, 33, 35, 47, 48, 51, 66, 71-73, 83, 86, 123, 124, 126, 128, 138, 141, 155, 157, 158, 159, 165, 167, 184, 185, 252, 256, 266, 305, 308-310, 335, 337,
 vision, 9, 11, 12, 18, 51, 59, 60, 62, 83, 85, 91, 92, 118, 130, 132, 134, 161, 167, 197, 198, 221, 222, 233, 238, 240, 261, 262, 288, 289, 315, 335, 337, 346, 349, 350,
 visionary, 149, 222, 236, 283, 289, 290, 246,
 vocation, 32, 44, 178, 191, 192, 194, 201, 229
 voice(s), 4, 9, 12, 16, 26-29, 32-35, 38, 50, 57, 60, 71, 73, 74, 83, 84, 94, 96, 104, 105, 117, 127, 130, 134, 146, 155, 159, 162, 164, 165, 167, 179, 181, 182, 192, 194, 198, 208, 221, 240, 248, 250, 251, 262, 268, 269, 276, 277, 283, 301-302, 306, 309, 317, 327, 335, 336, 351
 volume(s), 1-3, 5, 6, 17, 18, 31, 71, 146, 148, 244, 270, 332, 352, 353

W

wares, 211
 weakness, 102
 wealthy, 151
 welfare, 170, 202, 213, 215, 219, 250, 257, 284, 285

western, 9, 17, 20, 22, 24, 32, 61, 62, 141, 156, 157, 202, 206, 207, 218, 294, 306, 307, 321, 323, 326, 335

whispers, 53, 58, 98, 104

white, 20, 57, 61, 126, 137, 214, 317, 319-323, 326

wife, 40, 80, 91, 98, 138, 152-154, 163, 164, 174, 179, 184, 265, 279, 292, 293, 297, 302, 326

wisdom, 2, 4, 23, 24, 89, 93, 102, 106, 107, 148, 154, 217, 229, 288, 289, 314, 316, 330, 332, 337, 343

woman/men, 1-12, 15-18, 20-24, 24-35, 37-41, 44, 46-51, 53-62, 64-69, 71-73, 74, 78-80, 82-86, 88, 90, 91, 94, 96, 97, 104, 110-112, 114-118, 123-128, 130-134, 136-142, 145-150, 153-167, 169-173, 175-182, 184-188, 190-194, 196-198, 200, 202, 204, 206, 210, 212-217, 219-223, 225-228, 230-240, 242-257, 259-271, 273-286, 288-295, 297-310, 314-325, 327-329, 331, 332, 334-337, 339-344, 346-354

womb, 39, 163

work, 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 38, 41, 53-57, 60, 64, 66, 67, 69, 71, 76, 83-85, 92, 111, 113-118, 120, 123-128, 131, 133, 134, 136, 138, 140, 141, 149, 150, 152-161, 165-167, 169, 171, 172, 175, 179, 181, 182, 188, 191, 193, 198, 201, 202, 204-207, 210, 212-214, 216, 218, 223-226, 229, 232, 234, 240, 240-246, 249-253, 255, 256, 259, 261, 263-270, 271, 273, 274, 273, 276, 281, 284-287, 291-295, 297, 303, 308, 310, 314, 318, 319-324, 227-332, 335-337, 340, 343, 344, 348, 349, 353

workshops, 50, 66, 111, 133, 265, 284, 287, 315, 330

world, 2-5, 8, 9, 11, 15, 18, 23, 24, 27, 31, 33-35, 39, 55, 68, 71, 72, 74, 76, 80, 91, 97, 99-101, 110, 114, 116, 120, 121, 128, 130, 132, 139, 141, 157, 158, 162, 176, 181, 184, 188, 192, 197, 205-207, 214, 217, 222, 226, 228, 230, 237, 243, 253, 259, 261, 266, 273, 280, 282, 286, 290, 291, 300, 304, 306, 310, 316, 320, 323, 328, 332, 354

worship, 11, 84, 88, 166, 177, 193, 231, 263, 266

writing(s), 5, 9, 10, 12, 33, 46, 47, 55, 59, 61, 71, 73, 74, 78, 79, 104, 112, 113, 134, 138, 148, 162, 169, 173, 179, 181, 207, 222, 227, 236, 242, 248, 249, 260, 294, 295, 301, 303, 307, 315, 319, 336, 343, 353, 354

Y

Youth(s), 11, 40, 57, 78, 112, 123, 131, 163, 177, 224, 226, 274, 287, 305, 325, 326, 328-330, 340

Z

Zambia, 3, 4, 121, 131-142, 175-180, 182, 274

Zimbabwe, 50, 88, 89, 160-163, 16, 172, 186, 287

Zion, 200-202, 210-214, 216-219, 260

Zoom, 72, 155, 188