



DACB News Link

For the Friends of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

From the Director



The mission of the DACB is to collect, preserve, and make freely accessible biographical accounts and church

histories—from oral and written sources—integral to a scholarly understanding of African Christianity.

This is the first column that I have written as continuing director of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* since its relocation from New Haven to the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology more than one year ago. The *DACB* traces its beginnings to a scholarly consultation convened from August 31 to September 2, 1995 in New Haven, CT. A small but adequate grant from Pew Charitable Trust helped to pay for travel costs of attendees, and the Overseas Ministries Study Center hosted the meeting. At that time I was still professor of Global Christian Studies at Providence College and Seminary in Canada. Participants included well known scholars of Christianity in Africa. This modest meeting gave birth to what is now known as the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*. (cont. p.4)

When I moved from Winnipeg

New Editors and Advisors Join the DACB

As of January 2014, the DACB's administrative structure includes a newly constituted Editorial Committee and Advisory Council. In addition to Director Dr. Jonathan Bonk and Manager Michele Sigg, the Editorial Committee includes Dr. Dana Robert (Center for Global Christianity and Mission, Boston University School of Theology) and Dr. Lamin Sanneh (Yale Divinity School). (Read more about them on page 3.)

The composition of the Advisory Council reflects an effort to represent the major geographic and linguistic

regions of Africa, diverse denominational affiliations, and leadership within important religious institutions as well as in umbrella organizations representing theological education over the entire continent. It is the hope of the Editorial Committee that this small but select group of individuals will actively engage in shaping the vision and direction of the *DACB* over the next few years. The members are: Prof. Dr. James Amanze (Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa), Dr. Deji Ayegboyin (Univ. of Ibadan), Rév. Priscille Djomhoue (Association of

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Theological Institutions of Francophone Africa), Prof. Dr. Edison Muhindo Kalengyo (Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa), Prof. Dr. Philomena Njeri Mwaura (Kenyatta Univ.), Dr. Paul Nchoji Nkwi (Catholic Univ. of Cameroon), and Dr. Thomas Oduro (Good News Theological College and Seminary).

Boston University Welcomes the DACB



The Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology is delighted to welcome the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*! We are happy to share in this important project by providing a home for its editorial and technological aspects. Boston University is an appropriate base for the

DACB because of its long and distinguished history in African Studies. The university is deeply committed to open access scholarship, and the School of Theology supports the mission of the *DACB*. We welcome *DACB* director, Dr. Jonathan Bonk, as Research Professor. Project manager Michele Sigg is a doctoral student in the School of Theology. BU faculty, alums, and students have contributed essays to the *DACB*. In addition, we

count Bishop Josiah Kibira, a distinguished *DACB* subject, among our graduates. For many reasons, therefore, the CGCM rejoices in collaborating with scholars to record and to preserve the stories of African Christian leaders. Welcome, *DACB*!

Dana L. Robert, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Global Christianity and Mission; Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission, Boston University School of Theology



DACB Profile: Dr. Michael Adeleke Ogunewu

Dr. Michael Adeleke Ogunewu is a visiting lecturer in Church History at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso. He studied at the Faith Christian Theological Seminary, Nigeria (Th.D) and received a B.A. Ed in Religious Education from the University of Lagos. He holds an M.A. in Religious Studies and a Ph.D in Church History from the University of Ibadan as well as a Post-Graduate Diploma in Mass Communication from the National Open University of Nigeria. He is the president of the Amen Mission Inc., a prayer fellowship based in Lagos. He is married to Bolanle, a nurse-midwife.

This is the story of how he became involved in collaborating with the DACB.

I was introduced to the DACB through Professor Deji Ayegboyin while a student at the University of Ibadan. I considered it to be a worthwhile project and decided to get involved. Thus far, I have written twenty-three biographies for the DACB and I hope to continue contributing to the project in the near future.

When Professor Ayegboyin served as president of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso, he invited me to come to the seminary as a visiting lecturer.

The seminary organized classes and students were encouraged to be involved in the DACB. Many participated with enthusiasm, writing on the lives of African Christian ministers. I have personally supervised over fifty stories written by students at NBTSS, most of which have been uploaded to the DACB Web site (www.DACB.org). More are in the process of being submitted for editing.

The DACB is a commendable project because

it presents the African perspective on Christian History and enables African Christians to write their Christian History by highlighting their own contributions to the faith. Religious institutions in Africa can get involved in this laudable project by becoming cooperating institutions and encouraging their students to contribute DACB biographies.

Michael Adeleke Ogunewu, Ph.D

Read his article on Pa Josiah Akindayomi on page 3.

“The DACB is a commendable project because it presents the African perspective on Christian History.”

No. of Stories	Countries
Over 100	Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria
50-100	DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda
11-50	Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo Brazzaville, Lesotho, Liberia, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan/South Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
10 or less	Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, CAR, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Reunion, Somalia, Togo
0	Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eq Guinea, Mayotte, St. Helena, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Western Sahara

State of the DACB Web site

Since January 2014, the DACB Web site has a new look. The homepage now contains several panels that highlight featured stories, themes, and news items. The goal is to create a more dynamic experience of the Web site and to highlight some lesser known items within the database. New pages recently added include the new advisors and the editorial committee accessible through the “people” page, and an updated Africa map showing South Sudan. Country pages now include current demographics of the national population and breakdown of the major religious traditions.

In the most recent tally of DACB stories online, there were 2,114 stories in English, 486 in French, 131 in Portuguese, and six in Kiswahili. The highest concentration of stories in French is in Madagascar (131) and DRC (85). On the English site, four countries have over 100 stories (109 in Sierra Leone, 278 in Ethiopia, 300 in South Africa, and 350 in Nigeria), nine have between 50 and 100 stories (DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda), 16 have ten stories or less, and nine countries have no stories at all.

In the distribution between major traditions, the DACB has 1002 stories in the general category of Protestants (non Anglicans), 350 Anglicans, 336 Catholics, 217 Orthodox, and 146 Independents.

Most biographies are of 20th century individuals (1304 stories) but the 19th c. has a fair presence with 947 stories. There are 74 stories of 18th c. figures, 32 of 16th-17th c. figures, and 144 Ancient Christians (before the 8th c.).

Of the total number of stories (2,114), only 228 are stories of women.

Akindayomi, Josiah Olufemi (1909 to 1980) Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria

Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi was the founder and first general overseer of what is today known as the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The church, today acclaimed as the fastest growing Pentecostal church in the world, started in 1947 as an independent prayer fellowship, the Glory of God Fellowship.

Josiah was born in 1909 into the Akindayomi family in Ondo State, Nigeria. From early childhood Josiah's parents noticed unusual things about him. When he was sick, allegedly his sickness, that usually defied traditional medicine—the most common treatment for sickness in those days—would abate and subsequently disappear once he was bathed with ordinary water. Josiah himself also had an inkling that he was different for although he grew up in an environment where the worship of *Ogun* (the Yoruba divinity of iron and war) was prevalent, he was aware of the existence of a greater power

and yearned to know the true God who created the earth and everyone in it.

The turning point for Josiah came when, in 1940, he dreamed of an old man scratching his leg. He woke up the next morning with a sore on his leg that deteriorated significantly within a short period of time. Then he heard the voice inside him telling him to submit to God's will and to serve him. Without the use of medication, the Lord healed the sore on his leg. This marked the beginning of a definite relationship with God.

Akindayomi was married in 1947 and relocated to Lagos. In Lagos, he worshipped with the Cherubim and Seraphim Church at its Ibadan Street, Ebute-Metta branch, where Prophet Onanuga, the immediate successor to Prophet Moses Orimolade was the leader. In 1952 he decided to leave the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. The fellowship he had started then grew into the Re-

deemed Christian Church of God. The name of the church was said to have been revealed to him in a vision. Allegedly the letters forming the name of the church appeared in the English alphabet to Akindayomi, who could neither read nor write. Miraculously he was able to scribble down the individual letters which, when put together, read "The Redeemed Christian Church of God."

In this same vision God promised to take the church to the ends of the earth and declared that the Lord Jesus Christ would meet the church when he returned in glory. The Lord also established a covenant with Akindayomi similar to the Abrahamic covenant in the Bible, promising to meet all the needs of the church in wonderful ways if only members would serve Him faithfully and be obedient to His Word. The Redeemed Christian Church of God was formed, based on this covenant, in 1952. According to



Pa Josiah Akindayomi

sources, God strongly instructed the Redeemed Christian Church of God not to merge with any foreign or overseas body. Today the church has become one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in the world.

Akindayomi died in 1980 at the age of 71. At the last count there were about 2,000 parishes of the church in Nigeria. The church has expanded to many other African nations, to Europe and to the United States.

Michael Adeleke Ogunewu, Ph.D

You can read the full article online at http://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/akindayomi_josiah.html

Editorial Committee Welcomes Important Scholars

Dr. Dana Robert is Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission and the director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University. Her publications include *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (ed., Eerdmans 2008), *African Chris-*

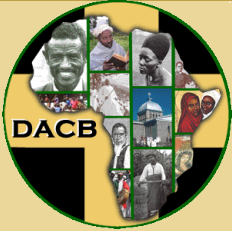
tian Outreach, Vol 2: Mission Churches (ed., South African Missiological Society, 2003); and *Frontiers of African Christianity* (ed., Univ. of South Africa Press, 2003). With her husband M. L. Daneel, she edits the book series "African Initiatives in Christian Mission" (Univ. of South Africa Press).

Dr. Lamin Sanneh is D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity, Professor of History,

and Professor of International and Area Studies at Yale University. He is the author of several books and of more than two hundred articles on religious and historical subjects. His publications include *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*, *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa*; *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel beyond the West*; and *Disciples of All Nations:*

Pillars of World Christianity (Oxford University Press, 2008), the inaugural volume in the Oxford Studies in World Christianity series of which he is series editor. In 2011, Dr. Sanneh convened an international forum in Ghana, the result of which was the Accra Charter of Religious Freedom and Citizenship (Read the full text in *IBMR*, vol. 35, no.4, Oct. 2011).

Read their full bios at <http://www.dacb.org/jonbio.htm>



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Two of the DACB's most prolific Nigerian contributors are Dr. Michael A. Ogunewu and Rev. Isaac Jeji Ayegboyin, from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosh. They are pictured here on the left with Dr. Bonk, at the 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies Conference, April 14-17, 2013 at the University of Ibadan.

In future issues, look for news about...

- The Canadian Friends of the DACB
- A regular e-letter for pastors featuring homiletical/inspirational versions of stories for use in preaching
- Anticipated co-sponsored regional academic conferences on African Biography
- An annual scholarly *Journal of African Christian Biography*
- A Noteworthy column: *Please submit news of persons, conferences, scholarly activities related to African biography and African church history to dacb@bu.edu*

The Director's Column (cont. from p.1)

(Canada) to New Haven in July 1997 to become Associate Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, the fledgling DACB came with me. In June 2000 I was named Executive Director of the OMSC, and within two years funding was secured to engage Ms. Michele Sigg as Project Manager. Over the next ten years of her creative and expert management, the enterprise moved steadily forward to become the impressive database that it is today.

In the summer of 2012, in anticipation of my retirement from OMSC this year, the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* was relocated to the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University School of Theology. I gladly agreed to spearhead the DACB for the first five years of its tenure in Boston. The School of Theology designated me Research Professor of Mission and continuing director of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, offering infrastructural support, office space, and a welcoming collegial environment. Mrs. Sigg—currently pursuing her PhD at Boston University—continues to serve part time as Project Manager.

The relocation has provided an opportunity to rethink the conceptual and administrative structures of the Dictionary, with a view to the security, continuity, growth, and relevance of the database. Financial gifts* to Boston University, designated for the DACB, are income tax deductible. Furthermore, the University withholds no administrative percentage of DACB-designated gifts, and permits funds not spent in one fiscal year to roll over to the next.

With approximately one out of four Christians now residing in sub-Saharan Africa, the task of creating a sustainable and functional memory base of Christianity in Africa is more crucial than ever. As Robert Pinsky observed, "A people is defined and unified not by blood but by shared memory.... Deciding to remember, and what to remember, is how we decide who we are." A people without a shared memory is not a people; a church without an intentional and functional means of recording, preserving and reflecting on its memory must soon disintegrate into cultural and historical incoherence. It is the DACB's goal that between now

and 2020, scores of African educational and research institutions will join in the task of researching and recording the stories of their local, regional and denominational Church fathers and mothers, so that the number of subjects whose stories appear in the database will increase from its current level of just over 2000 to numbers more in keeping with the scale of Christianity on that continent.

We appreciate your continued interest in the enterprise, and welcome your feedback and support.

Jonathan J. Bonk, Ph.D.
Research Professor of Mission,
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Director of the DACB

¹ Robert Pinsky, "Poetry and American Memory," *The Atlantic Online* (October 1999), URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99oct/9910pinsky.htm>

*Donations in support of the DACB should be sent to:
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For information regarding wire transfers, contact Mr. Kevin Keith at: kkeith@bu.edu.