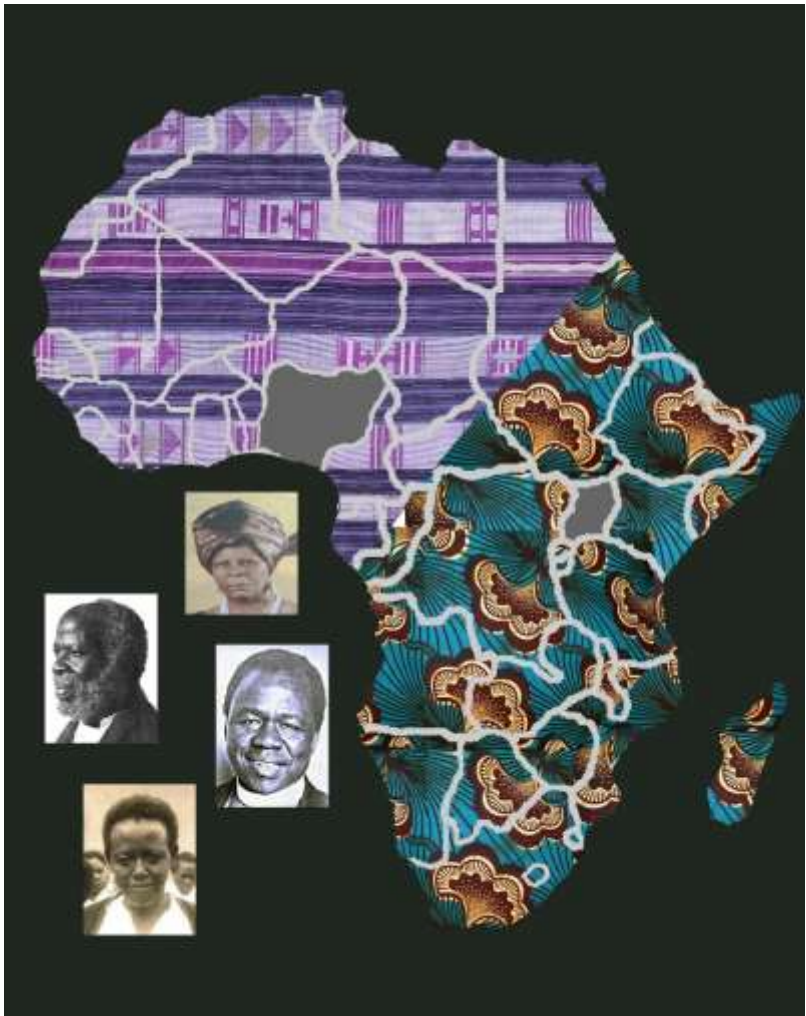


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Focus:

Agnes Okoh (Nigeria)
Kivebulaya, Luwum, Njangali
(Uganda)
Lamin Sanneh



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Agnes Okoh: An African Prophetess, Missionary, Pastoral Trainer, and Mother

by Thomas Oduro

Christianity arrived in Nigeria and in most West African countries thanks to the efforts of priests who accompanied explorers from Portugal in the fifteenth century. Their efforts to plant Christian missions yielded negligible results that were short-lived mainly because of their zest for trade in gold and slaves, and the implementation of unsuitable mission strategies that were the norm in Europe at the time.

Christian missions in Nigeria

Several centuries later, western Protestant missionaries, who were eventually joined by Catholics, made inroads into Nigeria. The most prominent missions were the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1842), the Church Missionary Society (1842), the Scotland Missionary Society (1846), the Southern Baptist Mission (1850), the Catholic *Societas Missionum ad Afros*—also known as the Society for African Missions (SMA) (1860), the Qua Ibo Church (1887), and Sudan Interior Mission (1937). Nigerian Christian pioneers sought to streamline western missionary concepts and strategies in the context of Africa by establishing the following African churches: the Native Baptist Church (1888), the United Native African Church (1891), the African Church, Bethel (1901), and the United African Methodist Church, Eleja (1917).

Several momentous events occurred in Nigerian Christianity during the first three decades of the twentieth century: the ministry of the popular itinerant prophet, Garrick Sokari Braide, the rise of Aladura movements, the emergence of Classical Pentecostal churches, and the subsequent revival of Christianity in the 1930s.

The Mission of Garrick Sokari Braide

Garrick Sokari Braide, who was popularly called “Elijah II” by his followers, was an indigene of Bakana,¹ a town now in Rivers State. Though a member of the Church Missionary Society, he healed many people without recourse to western medicine or traditional medications, and introduced dancing, clapping and singing hymns in the vernacular in the CMS congregation in

¹ Other scholars claim he was born in Obonoma, also in present day Rivers State. See Michael Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria: 1920 to 2010*, (Lagos: Amen Mission Inc., 2015), 15.

Bakana.² He was subsequently accused of doing things contrary to Anglican dogma and praxis. On several occasions, the British colonial government also accused him of misdemeanors including, “perpetrating actions that could lead to insurrection by destroying idols, inciting the blacks against the whites, undermining constituted authority, obtaining money by false pretences....”³ The undisclosed accusation against him, however, was that of causing a downward trend in the production, importation, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. As a result, he was jailed for two years. He died shortly after he was released from jail in 1918.

At this time, God was preparing another local leader from the same area to take on Braide’s mantle. This new leader was the prophetess Agnes Okoh who was eighteen years old when Braide died. It is not clear whether Agnes Okoh heard of the ministries and persecution of Prophet Braide.

The emergence of Aladura movements/churches is regarded as the second wave of the emergence of the story of African Independent Churches in Nigeria. Considered the “seed sowing era” of the revival of Christianity in the 1930s, it was more intensive in western Nigeria, particularly, among the Yoruba. Thus, most of the trailblazers of these two momentous events in Nigerian Christianity were indigenes of the Yoruba ethnic group. The spread of Christ Army Church and the Aladura movement to eastern Nigeria, where Agnes Okoh was born and bred, was very slow. There were few congregations of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and Christ Apostolic Church in eastern Nigeria and these were mostly frequented by the Yoruba. Most likely, Agnes Okoh was oblivious of the Aladura movement and the revival of Christianity in western Nigeria.

Christian Missions in Eastern Nigeria

The planting of Christianity in eastern Nigeria was spearheaded by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1887 and the Roman Catholic Church in 1885. The missionary strategies of the two western mission agencies, apart from preaching the gospel, and building schools and medical centers, included the buying back of slaves, rescuing twins and the mothers of twins who were marked for death, and the provision of relief services to victims of epidemics. Translation of the Bible into the Igbo language also accounted for the success of Christianity in the area.

There were relatively fewer prayer houses and healing homes in eastern Nigeria, perhaps, due to the suppression of the Braide movement. The prayer houses and healing homes were led by African Independent Church prophetesses. Among the most popular ones were Madam Nwokolo’s All Christian Praying Band and Prophetess Ozoemena’s Prayer House.

² Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity*, (London: Edward Arnold: 1986), 166.

³ Michael A. Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs*, 15.

Women in Ministry

The acceptance of women into leadership positions in Christianity has long been a thorny issue. Many church leaders and scholars use Paul's injunction against women in 1 Cor. 14:34 to downplay the ecclesiastical leadership roles of women in Christianity. The paradox of the non-acceptance of feminine leadership in Christianity *vis-à-vis* their immense contributions and giftedness took centuries of debates and controversies before some churches voted to ordain women into pastoral ministry. In some denominations, where women are allowed to initiate and lead ministries, they are denied full ordination.

In West Africa, as in other parts of Africa, women are socially marginalized in many respects. This is poignantly stated in some African proverbs. The Akans of Ghana for example say, “*Ɔbaa wɔ mpempem a, ɔbarima na ɔhwɛ so*” meaning, “No matter how rich a woman may be, it is a man who looks after her.”⁴ The Igbos say, “Women are to be seen but not heard.”

The ministry of Prophetess Agnes Okoh

The phenomena of the call and successful ministry of Prophetess Agnes Okoh can be appreciated when one considers the immensity of the background challenges she encountered.

Why should people take seriously the claims of “a divine call” by a woman who was illiterate in her own vernacular—let alone leave everything in order to follow her? How was she able to establish a church and lead it? How did her illiteracy promote or affect the formulation of theological beliefs, evangelistic strategies, educational programs, mission statements and other policy statements of the church [she later founded]? How did an illiterate woman, who lived in a pluralistic religious society, claim to contextualize theology while at the same time claiming not to be syncretistic? How could an African woman, who under normal circumstances was marginalized, lead a church composed of both sexes?⁵

Prophetess Agnes Okoh's ministry—her conviction and acceptance of her call, and her obedience to the divine mandate of preaching the gospel amidst suspicions, allegations and persecutions—is an extraordinary testimony to the work of God in eastern Nigeria. Her legacy has remained unsung for almost four decades. It is important to shed light on her missionary exploits and on how they led to the establishment of Christ Holy Church

⁴ Peggy Appiah, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Ivor Agyeman-Duah, *Bu Me Be: Proverbs of the Akans*, (Banbury: Ayebeia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2007), 17.

⁵ Thomas Oduro, *Christ Holy Church International: The Story of an African Independent Church*, (Lagos: Greater Heights Publishers, 2009), 13.

International, an African Independent Church that has impacted the lives of scores of people. She used her motherly qualities to train male leaders who learned from the example of her faithfulness to God, her commitment to the divine mandate, her obedience to God no matter how intense the challenges were, and her total dependence on divine guidance, no matter how irrational it may have seemed. Church growth pundits could learn from her ability to lay down pragmatic administrative structures, formulate theologies, and develop liturgies that are soundly African yet in consonance with an evangelical worldview and that aided in the strategic spread of the church she established. Missiologists and missionaries could learn from studying her teaching and training methods. By her example, she taught her followers to be at the forefront of evangelizing Nigeria by planting more than a thousand congregations and undertaking international evangelization which has resulted in the growth of the church in the Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Kenya within a period of seventeen years.

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Agnes Okoh
1905 to 1995
Christ Holy Church International
Nigeria

Her Early Life

Agnes Amanye Okoh was born in May 1905 to Onumba Emordi, a farmer and Ntonefu, a trader. They were both indigenes of Ndoni, a town in the Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria. Even though Emordi and Ntonefu gave birth to thirteen children, due to the high rate of child mortality, only Agnes survived. Her parents were not Christians but they allowed her to worship periodically with a Roman Catholic congregation. Agnes was not educated though there were many schools being run by the Church Mission Society (CMS) and the Roman Catholic Church.

At the death of her parents, she left Ndoni to live with some relatives in Asaba. She became a petty trader, buying and selling textiles until 1924, when she was married to James Okoh, a Ghanaian immigrant sailor who was residing in Nigeria. James and Agnes Okoh gave birth to a daughter, Anyele, on May 5, 1925 and, two years later, to a son, Marius Anyetei, on April 5, 1927.

Her Religious Experience and Call

James Okoh died in the early 1930s. While Agnes was recuperating from the grief of losing her husband, Anyele died on April 1, 1938, at the age of 13. Okoh struggled hard to overcome her grief and the challenges of single parenthood. She developed a severe migraine that defied Western medicine and traditional medicines. As a result, she became restless. There were few African Independent Churches with prayer houses or healing homes in Igboland at that time. Among the few that were operating in eastern Nigeria were the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, the Christ Apostolic Church, and Madam Nwokolo's Prayer house at Ufuma.⁶

After falling sick and being in a state of despondency for over four years she met a friend in 1942 who led her to the prayer house of Prophetess Ozoemena, popularly known as Ma Ozoemena, at Enugu. She spent fourteen days there. During that time, she was totally healed through prayer, in the name of Jesus. Ma Ozoemena, who became her pastor and spiritual mentor,

⁶ Ogbu Kalu, "Doing Mission through the Post Office: the Naked Faith People of Igboland 1920-1960," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft. Separat-Abdruck* (56-2000/4), 263-280.

propheesied that someday God would use Okoh but that she would have to wait for the signs of her calling into the ministry.

In April 1943, while returning from a market at Enugu, Okoh claimed to have heard a voice repeating the words “Matthew 10.” She turned around each time she heard the voice in an attempt to see the speaker but did not see anyone. She quickly ran to the home of a friend and asked her “What is Matthew 10?” The friend, who was semi-literate, told her that “Matthew 10” is part of the Gospel according to Matthew in the New Testament. They sought the help of a young man who read the entire chapter of Matthew 10 to them in the Igbo language from the Union Igbo translation of the Bible. The two women then rushed to the prayer house of Prophetess Ozoemena. After hearing about Okoh’s religious experience, Ma Ozoemena reminded her of the earlier prophecy of God’s intention to use her. She reiterated the divine warning that Okoh should not rush into the ministry but should wait for God’s timing. Meanwhile Okoh continued in her textile business at Enugu market. She became so resourceful that she was able to finance her son’s education and look after him until he got a job.

The Commissioning and Itinerant Evangelism of Agnes Okoh

Ma Ozoemena commissioned Okoh for an itinerant evangelistic ministry. Okoh immediately discontinued her textile business. She sold all her merchandise and distributed the proceeds to the poor and needy. She left Ma Ozoemena’s prayer house and began fasting and praying, imploring God to empower and direct her in the ministry that had been entrusted to her. She claimed that she was assured of God’s presence in a dream in which she was asked to use John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly,” as the thematic message of her ministry. She bought a hand bell and began preaching, traveling from one place to another. She began her itinerant ministry in late 1947 in Onitsha, a town in Eastern Nigeria known for its commercial activities. Faith in God was her major emphasis. Matthew, chapter 10, was her favorite Bible passage. However, her motto was John 10:10. She went to many places in Igboland wearing a white garment with a white headscarf. She held a Bible in her left hand and the hand bell in her right hand. Her medium of communication was the Igbo language. When ministering to non-Igbo speakers, she also spoke Pidgin English, a street English commonly spoken in Nigeria by the educated and uneducated alike.

In Onitsha, usually in the market places, she announced her presence by ringing the hand bell, then sang a Gospel song and began preaching. Reportedly she had the habit of ending her preaching by praying for her audience. The thrust of her message centered on repentance, righteousness, and holiness. As people came to her with their problems, she realized that she had the gifts of healing and seeing visions in addition to prophesying. Her healing and prophetic prowess attracted many people to

her. Those who were healed began spreading the news about the new prophetess. Her popularity, therefore, spread like a bush fire.

She traveled either by public transport – buses and trains – or on foot. In the villages, she sought permission from the elders, as traditional protocol demands, before beginning to preach. Finally, she settled at Onitsha and coordinated the affairs of her prayer centers from there, while continuing her evangelistic ministries in Igboland. Among her early converts were ten men and two women who helped her to proclaim the Gospel from one place to another.

In contrast to other centralized prayer houses, Okoh established her ministry in many towns and villages in Igboland. She trained her own pastors and commissioned them to take care of the spiritual needs of the people. Therefore the ministry was not centered on her personality or her gifts only. The ministry, at this point, was considered non-denominational. It eventually metamorphosed into a full-fledged denomination, called Christ Holy Church in Nigeria.

At the outbreak of the civil war in Nigeria in 1967, Okoh closed down all the prayer centers that were in the towns and villages where soldiers were doing battle. Okoh and most of the members sought refuge at Arondizougu, also in Igboland, where there was relative peace. Though a refugee, she continued to pray, comfort, counsel, preach, and heal the other refugees and people living in and around Arondizougu. Her services were not limited to the civilian population; her followers claim that some soldiers went to her for prayers. She became very popular and opened more prayer centers in the environs of Arondizougu where she stayed until the war ended.

What impressed people and convinced them that God was with her was her ability to quote the Bible from memory even though she was illiterate.

The Persecution of Prophetess Agnes Okoh

Some people viewed Okoh's evangelistic ministry with cynicism. Some who were amazed at the effectiveness of her healing gifts but found it hard to believe that God would use a woman so powerfully, began attributing the source of her powers to Mami Water. This was "a name applied by Africans to a class of female and male water divinities or spirits that have accreted elements from several European, New World, and Indian cultural traditions."⁷ The blessing of water as an element of healing by the prophetess was seen by many as a legitimate proof of the Mami Water syndrome. Some people, as a result, made fun of the church, calling it "Mami Water Church." Some also speculated that she had a shrine at Ndoni, her hometown.

⁷ Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, "Mami Water in African Religion and Spirituality" in *African Spirituality*, Jacob K. Olupona., ed. (New York, Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000), 199.

Whenever her attention was drawn to what the cynics were saying about her, Okoh would either say, “*Adigh m anu okwu ekwensu*” which literally means, “I do not hear the voice of the Devil” or “*Chukwu me kwalu fa ebele*” (May God have mercy on them).⁸ Members of the church were taunted for attending a church founded by a woman, perhaps due to the aforementioned poor image of women in Igbo society at the time. It was even alleged that some members of Western mission-founded churches and some Charismatic churches made fun of Christ Holy Church members for dancing, clapping their hands, and shouting “Hallelujah!” during worship times. As a result, many people ridiculed the church calling it the “Hallelujah Church.” Some people who donated lands for the church allegedly were persuaded to take back their lands under pressure by some Catholic leaders.

The title *Odozi Obodo*

In order to test the power of the spirit behind her ministry, the elders of many towns and villages treacherously offered her the evil forest⁹ (*ajo oshia*), also known as bad bush (*ajaw-awufia*), as a place to start a congregation. The evil forests were haunted and dreaded places because they were believed to be inhabited by malevolent spirits, wild animals, and the ghosts of people who were not given proper burials, either as a result of their low social status and or because they were infected with communicable diseases. The spirits in the evil forests were believed to be vengeful towards the living.

Knowing the beliefs about the *ajo oshia* among the Igbos, Okoh accepted the offer of land. She and her followers then built huts and made the forests their habitation. Inhabitants of many villages became members of her church after hearing and seeing that Okoh and her followers suffered no mishaps. Okoh invited all those who were not afraid to live in the forests either to build houses there or to use portions of the land to farm. Her bold and generous acts increased the economic power of many villagers because the forests were very fertile lands.

In recognition of her ability to overcome evil forces, to heal people of all kinds of sickness, and to turn dreaded forests into useful places for her followers and other villagers, many observers of her ministry began calling her *Odozi Obodo*. She was, thus, popularly known as Mama Odozi Obodo, literally meaning, “Mama, the town repairer” or “Mama, the nation builder.” Peter DomNwachukwu defines the accolade “Odozi Obodo” as “one who

⁸ Clement Obiokoye, Assistant General Evangelist and Senior Superintendent in charge of Aba Superintendency, interview by author, August 25, 2003, Aba, Abia State, tape recording, Good News Theological College & Seminary, Accra.

⁹ For more on evil forests, read, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday 1959) 18, 32.

shapes society and keeps it morally pure.”¹⁰ The title nearly replaced Okoh’s real name.

Significant Leadership and Spiritual Qualities of Prophetess Agnes Okoh

Training of leaders

While training her pastors, Okoh was said to have recognized the special qualities of her trainees and, consequently, gave them appellations (motivational names) such as *Agu* (Lion) or *Enyi* (Elephant) which echoed those distinctive qualities.¹¹ She used the appellations to build their faith, encourage and challenge them, and to motivate them into action. As a result, her trainees were said to have accomplished many feats they thought they could not do. She called the entire membership of the church “*Umu Chineke!*” (Children of God!).

Okoh used the pedagogy of repetition to influence her followers. Some of her most famous sayings are: “*Ka anyi nu onu Dinwenanyi*” (“Let us listen to the voice of the Lord”) and “*Rapu ife nine n’aka Dinwenanyi*” (“Leave everything in the hands of the Lord”).

Faith in God and humility

Her faith in God was said to be unflinching. Not only did she communicate her faith to her followers, but she also demonstrated it even to the disbelief of her followers at times. She was so committed to God’s work that, according to Rev. Okonkwo, she would rather have starved than to allow God’s work to fail.¹² She listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit constantly, saying, “Let’s hear from God.”¹³

Humility and contentment were the hallmarks of her leadership. Okoh never considered herself as a pastor and leader of the Church. She was content with her prophetic ministry in the Church and thus referred to herself as a “prophetess of God.” According to Rev. David Nwaizuzu, one of her early followers, “When men began joining the church she gave them leadership positions. Mama never baptized, she never gave a communion, and

¹⁰ Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity: an Inculturation Model for the Igbo* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 88.

¹¹ Many leaders of Christ Holy Church have some appellations that spur them into action.

¹² Enoch Okonkwo, “Interview with Glad News” interview by Samuel O. A. Ozomah, n.d. *Glad News*, 1, no. 2. (n.d.), 9.

¹³ Enoch Okonkwo, interview by Samuel Ozomah, n.d. *Glad News*, 1, no. 2. (n.d.), 13.

she never ordained anyone.”¹⁴ With the exception of her sole prerogative of appointing leaders of the Church—a function she usually claimed was revealed to her by God through prophecies or visions—she did not use her position as the founder to usurp the functions of the male leaders and she ran the church from the backstage.

Her Healing Ministry

Okoh’s ministry was filled with numerous healing miracles. Her own experience of being healed of a severe migraine in 1942 gave her first-hand knowledge of God as a healer. Commissioned to preach a life-in-Christ message (John 10:10), she considered healing as an integral part of the life-in-Christ package and, therefore, did not hesitate to pray for all those who were sick in body and soul.

The Church initially practiced a strict form of faith healing; one that did not permit members to make other choices when sick. “Nobody was allowed to take any form of medicine in the early stages of Christ Holy Church, from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Those who secretly took any form of medicine were exposed by the Holy Spirit. It was an abomination for a member of this church to take medicine when sick.”¹⁵

The apex of her healing ministry was in 1963 when she claimed that God had revealed to her in a dream a stream that she could use to heal. She described the site of the stream to some of her pastors and asked them to go and locate the stream. After many failed attempts, they found the Nkissi stream in the northwestern part of Onitsha.¹⁶ The Nkissi stream was dirty, but as she and her workers began to weed around the stream, clear spring water gushed out – something they considered as a confirmation of the revelation. Okoh sent her workers to announce to the people of Onitsha to assemble at the stream with all their infirmities.

For six months in 1963, Okoh went to the stream on every other Tuesday morning at 9:00 a.m. Dressed as simply as an elderly Igbo woman, she led her workers in singing songs of praises and gave a brief sermon. She would then bless the stream, drink from it herself, and ask her pastors to take a drink before inviting those present to take a drink in order to be healed. Those who came with containers would then be allowed to fill them with the water after everyone had drunk from the stream. The water in the containers was given to sick friends and relatives who could not make a trip to the stream. People flocked to the stream from many parts of Nigeria.

¹⁴ David O. U. Nwaizuzu, former leader of Christ Holy Church International, interview by author, August 2, 2003, Onitsha, Anambra State, tape recording, Good News Theological College & Seminary, Accra.

¹⁵ Emmanuel Alamanjo, interview by author, August 31, 2003, Lagos, Lagos State, recording, Good News Theological College & Seminary, Accra.

¹⁶ The Nkissi stream can be located behind the walls of *The Church of the Holy Spirit* (a Catholic Church) at Omagba, Onitsha.

A similar revelation was made to the prophetess in 1973. This time the Olo Ogwashi stream at Ogwashi-Ukwu at Aniocha South Local Government Area in Delta State was used. The procedure and the results were similar to those of the Nkissi stream. The only difference was that while the Nkissi was used for half a year the Olo Ogwashi was used only five times.

Okoh blessed oil for healing. She asked members who were sick to bring water from their homes to be blessed for healing. Okoh, it must be noted, did not make water and oil medicines to be taken when one was ill. Okoh trained many women as midwives, also known in West Africa as traditional birth attendants. One of the roles of the wives of pastors in the Church is to perform the duties of a midwife. Okoh thus added a wider dimension to her ministerial functions – a dimension that was very relevant to female leaders and members.

Her Prophetic Ministry

Okoh is widely remembered for the exact fulfillment of her predictions and prophecies warning people of impending omens if they did not stop their sinful practices. She was also known to have exposed the secret deeds and thoughts of some people – thoughts that were inimical to the fellowship in the church and humanity.¹⁷ She prophesied while having a conversation with people.¹⁸

Three of Okoh's many prophecies have endeared her to the hearts of many. First, she prophesied the outbreak of the civil war in Nigeria that raged from 1966 to 1970.¹⁹ Her second prophecy, which baffled and troubled many people, stated that the war would end "after December 1969."²⁰ The third prophecy was about mission in foreign lands. In the late 1950s, following the successful mission work by some Nigerian AICs in other West African countries, some leaders of the church began pressuring Okoh to send evangelists to establish congregations in Cameroon and other neighboring countries but she resisted. Typical of her, she told her followers to wait for God's own time. In 1963, she prophesied about an evangelistic timetable which she said would take place in God's own time. A musician in the church immediately made the prophecy into a song:

Ayi ga'bu kwasi ndi ama – ndi ama Chukwu

¹⁷ Ijeoma Nwachukwu, interview by author, August 18, 2003.

¹⁸ According to John Ekweoba, after seventeen years of marriage without children, Okoh prophesied to him in the middle of a conversation at Ndoni that God had answered his prayers and that his wife would give birth to a child that year. Today Rev. Ekweoba and his wife have four children. Interview by author, August 11, 2003.

¹⁹ Gabriel Chiemeka, *Glad News*, 1, no. 2. (n.d.), 7.

²⁰ Gabriel Chiemeka, *Glad News* 1, no. 2 (n.d.), 7. Harvest is a term used by West African Christians for a one day fund raising activity on the premises of a church.

Nime Nigeria, Nime Ghana, rue ebe nine nke Afrika
Ayi ga'bu kwasi ndi ama – ndi ama Chukwu
Rue Jerusalem, rue Samaria, rue ebe nine uwa soturu

The translation of the song in English is:

We shall be witnesses – witnesses of God
In Nigeria, in Ghana, up to all parts of Africa
We shall be witnesses – witnesses of God
To Jerusalem, to Samaria, unto the end of the earth.

Members of the Church began singing that song anytime they met to worship or anytime the issue of international evangelism was raised until 1999 when the Church, for the first time in their evangelist campaigns, bought land in Ghana and registered the name of the church. The first congregation in Ghana was established in July 2000.²¹

Her Philanthropic Activities

The most common testimony about Okoh by those who knew her is that “Odozi Obodo loved everybody.” Apart from meeting the spiritual needs of people she tried as much as possible to meet their physical needs – food, clothing, money, etc. Her love and kindness, according to her followers, were not limited to members of her church only.

The people of Ndoni, her hometown, fondly remember her for her philanthropic work. She allowed the leaders of the town to use a house, built for her by the Church, as the guesthouse of the town. She offered rooms and hospitality to government officials and magistrates who were on duty at Ndoni. She also built roads for the town.

Okoh built a nursery and primary school in her hometown in 1994, one year before her death. It was later named in her honor the Odozi Obodo Memorial Nursery and Primary School. Tuition was free and she paid the salaries of the teachers. The fee-free policy of the school, enabled the poor to give their children an education, at least to the primary level. In recognition of her support of educational advancement at Ndoni, Okoh was honored by the Rivers State Government with a certificate of recognition during the launching of the Women’s Education Campaign on July 8, 1987.

In 1984, Okoh single-handedly built an eight-room maternity home for Ndoni and the surrounding villages. Services at the maternity home are free for both members and non-members of the Church. The midwife and four other workers were all paid by the prophetess.

²¹ As of June 2017, the Church has congregations in the Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia and Kenya.

Okoh was called home at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 10, 1995 at the age of 90. Leaders of the church have built a cathedral that can seat 3,000 worshippers in her honor at Ndoni.

Conclusion

Okoh's ministry lives on. Christ Holy Church now has over a thousand congregations and close to two million members in Nigeria. The Church, which celebrated its seventieth anniversary (1947-2017), has expanded its territories to the Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Kenya. Prophetess Agnes Okoh was, undoubtedly, God's gift to Africa and the world.

Thomas Oduro

This story exists in a short and long version on the *DACB* website. It was written by Thomas Oduro, author of *Christ Holy Church International: The Story of an African Independent Church* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2007). Rev. Thomas Oduro, Ph.D., is the president of Good News Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana, and *DACB* liaison coordinator. He also serves on the *DACB* Advisory Council and is a contributing editor to the *Journal of African Christian Biography*.

Self-Sacrificial Christian Pioneers of Uganda: Apolo Kivebulaya, Florence Spetume Njangali, and Janani Jakaliya Luwum

by Edison Kalengyo

Agents of the Church Missionary Society were the first to introduce Christianity to Uganda in 1877. However, the spread of the Christian faith in Uganda and its nearby areas is largely the result of the commitment, charisma, and zeal of indigenous Ugandan men and women of faith. This section of the issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography* focuses on the self-sacrificial ministry of three Uganda Christian leaders namely: Apolo Kivebulaya (c.1864 – 1933), Florence Spetume Njangali (1908 – 1984), and Janani Jakaliya Luwum (1922 – 1977). Each of these pioneers contributed in unique and significant ways to the spread and the growth of the Christian faith in Uganda and neighboring Boga (in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Apolo Kivebulaya was a pioneer missionary to present-day Democratic Republic of Congo, then called Congo Free State (1885-1908) and Belgian Congo (after 1908). He has been referred to as “The Apostle to the Pygmies” and labeled an African saint. With support from the Church Missionary Society (CMS), he served in Tooro Kingdom and pioneered Christian work in the Ituri Forest (Boga, present-day DRC) until he died in 1933. Apolo selflessly gave himself to the mission in Boga and the results of his efforts were almost immediate: “The inhabitants of Boga learned to read and were catechized, and the first baptisms of Boga Christians took place in April 1897.”²² He strongly believed in inculturation and gave priority to translating the Scriptures into indigenous languages. He was involved in the translation of Mark’s Gospel into Konjo and Mbuti. Apolo was convinced that vernacular translations were critical in helping indigenous communities appreciate the Christian faith.

Apolo endured constant harassment from authorities in Boga and sometimes from the communities but he never gave up. He established working relations and ministries among the Hema, Giti, Konjo, Talinga, and Lese ethnic groups. According to Emma Wild-Wood, “By 1931 Apolo had developed a network of small Anglican congregations within a radius of a three-day walk from Boga. He was responsible for 42 churches, 58 native teachers, and 1,426 baptized Christians, among six ethnic groups.”²³

A testimony to Apolo’s resilience and spirit of self-sacrifice is the fact that, when he was diagnosed with a terminal illness at Mengo hospital

²² See further, Emma Wild-Wood, ‘A Biography of Apolo Kivebulaya’, in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Vol. 38, No.3 July 2014) pp 145-148.

²³ Ibid.

in Uganda in 1933, he still chose to return to Boga that year, requesting that he be buried there with his head facing the forest. It would rightly be said that he gave his life out of love for God and the communities in Boga.

Florence Spetume Njangali was a trailblazer for the ordination of women in the Church of the Province of Uganda (a church with male-dominated structures) who set the example as the first ordained female deacon. Undeterred by being a lone voice, she set herself on what was to be a collision course with the establishment—the Native Anglican Church of Uganda and later the Church of the Province of Uganda. Her only weapon was her faith in the Almighty God, the one with whom all things are possible (Genesis 18:14; Luke 18:27).

Florence initially took up a teaching career at the church-founded Duhaga Boarding School. Following her conversion to the Christian faith in 1938, she took the radical step to enroll for a two-year lay readers course at Bishop Tucker Theological Seminary, Mukono in 1942. When she was appointed to the Native Anglican Church Synod in Uganda in 1953, she used her time there to speak against the prevailing patriarchal structures of the Church. She argued for the equality of women in ministry. However, the Native Anglican Church in Uganda objected to her call for the ordination of women.

When she retired from her teaching career in 1957, Florence undertook an ordination-track theological program at Bishop Tucker Theological College. After graduating in 1960, she was not ordained but simply commissioned as a church worker. However, her resilience paid off when, on September 10, 1973, she was ordained by Rt. Rev. Yustus Ruhindi, thus becoming the first Anglican deaconess in East Africa. Now the Church of the Province of Uganda boasts of over 300 ordained clergy women, thanks to Florence's resiliency and pioneering advocacy work with regard to women's ordination and ministry.

Janani Jakaliya Luwum led the protest against the excesses of the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin Dada. On February 16, 1977, he was martyred for his outspokenness and is recognized by the Anglican Communion as a twentieth-century martyr. In 2016, the Government of Uganda designated February 16 of each year as a public holiday to celebrate the life of Archbishop Janani Luwum.

Born in Northern Uganda, Janani was a herdsboy in his youth. He converted to the Christian faith on January 6, 1948. After seminary training, the young herdsboy later turned deacon and priest following his ordination. He was consecrated bishop of Northern Uganda in 1969 and later consecrated archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Boga-Zaire in 1974 during the country's most troubled period. Idi Amin Dada, who was president at the time, turned his wrath and guns on the people of Uganda, literally destroying the country during his reign of terror.

Moved by the suffering of his fellow Ugandans, Janani was selfless in speaking out against Amin, advocating for the human rights of ordinary

Ugandans and for social justice. Well aware of the danger to his life, he chose to speak out rather than be silent or play it safe. As the voice of the voiceless, he gave hope and courage to many Ugandans at the time. His love for Christ and his people compelled him expose the atrocities that were being committed by the Amin regime against the people of Uganda, many of whom lost their lives.

Being a man of action, Janani decided, with his bishops, to write a protest letter to Amin on February 5, 1977. Janani was subsequently arrested on trumped up charges of conspiracy and murdered by Amin. Janani is remembered for his unwavering faith in God and his courage to speak out against atrocities and social injustice. He paid the ultimate price with his own life.

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Apolo Kivebulaya
c.1864 to 1933
Anglican Church of the Congo
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Apolo was a Ugandan missionary considered the principal pioneer of the Anglican church in the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Early Life

Apolo and his twin brother Kato were born in Kiwanda (Uganda) in 1864. There were three other siblings in the family.

His original name was Waswa Munubi; “Apolo” and “Kivebulaya” are two foreign names he took later on. He chose the name Apolo during his baptism in 1895 because he remembered another Apolo who “being fervent in spirit, spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus” (Actes 18:25). The name “Kivebulaya” means “from Europe” and was given to him because he wore a suit under his white cassock. Apolo's fiancée died before they married so he decided to be single. He realized later that it was God's will he remain single in order to better fulfill his mission in the Congo.

Before becoming a Christian, Apolo was a Muslim soldier very much opposed to Christians. He was also an avid hemp smoker. During his military service, he deserted and fled to Ankole where he joined the Protestants (Anglicans). He was attracted by the Christian life, especially the example of Mackay, a missionary from the Church Missionary Society (London) who arrived in Uganda in 1878. He said: “At that time I was reading Matthew's Gospel which I liked very much, especially chapter five verse 13. This passage helped me to become a Christian and to abandon my military service.”

Ministry and Missionary Work

He started studying for baptism in 1894 and was baptized on January 27, 1895. In June of the same year, he decided to become a catechist and followed a basic biblical studies program in Namirembe (Kampala). When the catechists from Toro explained the need for people to serve in their region, Apolo was the first volunteer to go to Toro.

Apolo's ministry in Toro was very effective and he was satisfied with it. But a need for catechists arose in Nyagwaki, near Mount Rwenzori, and Apolo was sent to that area on May 9, 1895. But among the Bakonjo in Nyagwaki, Apolo did not think that his work was successful: “I was not happy because no one wanted to be baptized even though they would come and listen to the gospel.” A few months later, Apolo was called back from

Nyagwaki. At the same time, the Anglican Church of Uganda was seeking a missionary to go to Boga, in the Congo. Apolo offered to go.

Apolo left his country in December 1896 and walked over the Rwenzori mountains. When he saw the smoke beyond the river Semliki, he was convinced that there were human beings living there. He crossed the river and walked fifty miles through the forest to Boga. He only took along his Bible and his hoe. He carried his hoe to make sure he would survive in his new mission field because earlier, two other missionaries, Petero and Sedulaka, from Uganda who had come to Boga, had had to return home because they were not willing to work with their hands and could not feed themselves.

Persecution

Apolo preached the gospel in Boga and some of the people became Christians. But the majority were offended by his preaching, because it was against traditional practices, especially polygamy and the drinking of alcohol. Chief Tabaro was one of those who were offended and as a result, he forbade the Christians to build a church and ordered them not to give Apolo any food, but instead to let him die of hunger or be driven away. But this didn't discourage Apolo who continued his ministry in Boga.

In 1898 the chief's sister who lived in Apolo's household died by falling accidentally onto a spear that had been carelessly left in the tall grasses at a building site. Apolo was blamed for her death and was locked up, beaten, and then sent to Uganda to be tried.

There he had a dream which greatly helped him in his spiritual life. He said: "I saw Jesus shining like the sun. He said to me, 'Take heart, for I am with you.' Since that year whenever I preach, people leave their old customs and repent."

When Apolo was released, Chief Tabaro asked him to return to Boga and Apolo agreed. There the chief became a Christian and a close friend of Apolo.

Apolo was ordained a deacon on December 21, 1900 in Toro and then a priest in June 1903 in the Namirembe Cathedral. Contrary to Anglican tradition, he refused to wear the pastoral collar for personal reasons. Nevertheless, he did wear the liturgical robes.

Apolo declared the year 1921 "the year of the Gospel." Encouraged by the Lord, he took the gospel to the inhabitants of the forest: the Walese, the Wanyali, and the Wambuti (the latter are pygmies). He said: "Christ appeared before me as a man. It was like seeing a man who was my brother. He said to me: 'Go, preach in the forest, because I am with you. I am who I am—this is my Name.'" Apolo went among these peoples as a friend, eating their food and sleeping in their houses. He baptized pygmies for the first time in 1932.

His Legacy

Apolo died on May 30th, 1933 in Boga, his mission field. Contrary to tradition, he was buried with his head toward the west (not the east) at his own request. In so doing, his desire was to indicate that the gospel needed to be taken to the western part of the country.

His prophecy is accomplished. The Anglican Church is now one of the great churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Yossa Way

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Njangali, Spetume Florence
1908 to 1984
Anglican Church
Uganda

Florence Spetume Njangali strived to make women's ministry in the church of the Province of Uganda a reality. Not only did Njangali seek ordination for herself but through her work and ministry she also influenced the church of the Province of Uganda to pass a resolution allowing women's ordination in all the dioceses in Uganda.

Njangali was born in Parajwoki, in present day Hoima District, on April 10, 1908 to Nyakwebara and Eva Kacungira Amooti. She was baptized on October 31, 1920 in Saint Peter's Cathedral, Hoima. Even though Njangali's parents strongly adhered to the faith and practices of the Anglican Church, her uncle Bisereko Duhaga II, King of Bunyoro, was mainly responsible for her spiritual nurture.

Njangali began school in 1920 as one of the pioneer students of Duhaga Girls' Boarding School, a church- founded institution. In 1928 Njangali was appointed a teacher and was later promoted to deputy headmistress of the school. In 1938, Njangali became headmistress. Although by this time Duhaga Girls' Boarding School was more than fifteen years old, no headmistress had stayed for more than a few years and the school was suffering from a lack of constructive long-term leadership.

By the time Njangali became headmistress, Hoima was a small town, and Duhaga Girls' Boarding School had grown into a small institution. But Njangali foresaw that Hoima would become a great town and she envisioned the school, at its center, responding to the needs of the growing town. Her vision was to see Duhaga Girls' Boarding School give its best to the people of Uganda. Hoima church leaders supported Njangali and proudly followed her lead in the role she played in the larger life of the school.

On October 18, 1938, Njangali was converted and became an active member of the East African revival movement. The revival movement invigorated and renewed her life and offered her the challenge of a deeper experience of salvation in Christ and a more radical commitment to Christian discipleship. As a result of her transformation, Njangali enrolled in Bishop Tucker Theological Seminary, Mukono in 1942 for a two-year lay reader's course. She was the only female student in a class of thirty.

Njangali completed her lay reader's course in 1944 and returned to Hoima to continue her duties as headmistress. Soon the Native Anglican Church in Uganda recognized Njangali's work and influence and, in 1953, she was appointed a member of the Native Anglican Church Synod in Uganda. As a representative body, the Synod counted among its members many of the most powerful traditional leaders in the country. Consequently,

the Synod had a remarkable influence in the church, and commanded, as no other body did at the time, the confidence of the country. Njangali was proud to belong to such a powerful entity.

Njangali was also a member of the Diocesan Council that acted for the Synod in the interval between its sessions. Njangali's experience in the Native Synod and the Diocesan Council, gave her a unique opportunity to learn about the principles of democracy, self-government, and self-support.

During Njangali's time the Native Anglican Church of Uganda objected to the ordination of women. But Njangali took it upon herself to defend the rights of women as equal partners in church ministry. At the Synod, although a lay woman, whenever she was allowed to address the members she always made a passionate appeal to awaken the Native Anglican Church of Uganda to its need to abandon its patriarchal attitudes.

Undoubtedly Njangali did more than any other woman in the Native Anglican Church in Uganda to help women gain access to theological education. In 1957, she retired from her position as headmistress of Duhaga Girls' Boarding School and returned to Bishop Tucker Theological College for an ordination course the following year. When she signed up for theological training alongside men at the college, she was not easily accepted in classes by her male counterparts.

When Njangali graduated from Bishop Tucker Theological College in 1960 she was posted to Ankole-Kigezi diocese as a "church commissioned worker" to head the Mothers' Union Department.[1] Njangali worked to further the ideals of the organization and to promote the dignity of women by presenting monogamy as the best solution for marital relations, for example. She taught that openness, integrity, and honesty—characteristics of healthy relations between committed Christians—should apply even more to the marital relationship to foster real sharing, mutual love, and respect. Thanks to her efforts within the Mothers Union in Ankole-Kigezi Diocese, women gained the right to confess, testify, preach, and pray on an equal basis with men.

In 1965 she transferred her services to Rwenzori Diocese and eventually to Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese in 1972. In all three dioceses, Njangali assumed a position of great significance, and came to be recognized as a foremost figure in the Church of the Province of Uganda.

Njangali regarded baptism as the sacrament whereby an individual is introduced into the spiritual life of the church. However, she always insisted that the grace received at baptism had to be worked out in a visible way. In regards to the Eucharist, Njangali believed in the real presence, the doctrine whereby the body and blood of Christ are in some way really present in the bread and wine. She was however, adamant that the sacraments themselves do not have power to mediate salvation. In particular, she warned people not to trust in their baptism as a guarantee of salvation. For Njangali, salvation only comes through being washed in the blood of Christ shed on Calvary.

Even with such a good track record, Njangali was denied ordination on the grounds that she was a woman. This act of discrimination was rooted in the cultural bias of the Banyoro. During Njangali's time the Banyoro argued that God had appointed women to be subordinate to men and, therefore, there was no basis for Njangali to rule over men in any capacity.

While Njangali's male counterparts were ordained into the priesthood she worked as a commissioned worker until September 10, 1973 when her former classmate, the Rt. Rev. Yustus Ruhindi, ordained her as the first deaconess in East Africa.

In 1980, after taking a close look at Njangali's ministry as a deacon, Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese decided to make the ordination of women into the priesthood an official practice of the church. This filled Njangali with hope for the good ministry of women during her last years of work in Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese.

In 1981, at age seventy-three, feeling that her ministry was complete, Njangali decided to retire because of her age and due to an incurable disease from which she was suffering. However, the Dean of Saint Peter's Cathedral asked her to plant a daughter church in Katasiha during her retirement and she did so willingly.

Njangali's last days were spent with her family and dearest friends. On January 20, 1984, Njangali passed away in Mengo Hospital after what seemed to be only a short illness. Her funeral took place on January 23, 1984 at Saint Peter's Cathedral, Hoima, where she had served her diaconate.

Few women priests in their ministry have been able to respond to the challenges of the time in as many ways as Canon Florence Njangali did in the Church of the Province of Uganda.

Christopher Byaruhanga

Notes:

1. As women were not allowed to be ordained as deacons even at the outcome of the ordination course, they were called "church commissioned workers."

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This article, received in 2005, was researched and written by Rev. Dr. Christopher Byaruhanga, 2005-2006 Project Luke fellow and Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Uganda Christian University, a *DACB* Participating Institution. He is also the liaison coordinator at UCU.

Luwum, Janani Jakaliya

1922 to 1977

Anglican

Uganda / Rwanda / Burundi / Boga-Zaire

Janani Jakaliya Luwum was the archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire, and also one of the most influential leaders of the modern church in Africa. He was murdered in 1977 by Idi Amin or by henchmen under his orders.

Luwum was born in 1922 in the village of Mucwini in the Kitgum District of Northern Uganda. His parents were Christian. In this area (East Acholi, now Kitgum), Christianity was making very little progress. Luwum had the advantage of having a church teacher for a father, so he was constantly exposed to the principles of Christianity.

He attended Gulu High School and trained as a teacher at Boroboro Teacher Training College near Lira in Lango District.

"Although he came from a Christian home and attended a missionary training college," writes Margaret Ford, his personal secretary at the time of his death, "He was not at this time a converted Christian." His Christianity was only nominal. However, "...on January 6, 1948...through the preaching of an Acholi couple who had been radically changed through the influence of the East African Revival, Luwum felt convicted...and confessed Jesus Christ as his Lord and in tears, repented of his sins, crying aloud before God and men so that the villagers came running to see what was happening." [1] Convinced God had called him to preach the gospel, in 1949 he went to Buwalasi Theological College to train for full-time pastoral ministry.

He was ordained a deacon in 1953 and made a priest in 1955. He served in what was then called the Upper Nile Diocese of Uganda and, in 1962, after a one year course in Britain, he was appointed vice-principal of his alma mater, Buwalasi Theological College. In 1965, he was made principal of the same college after two years of further theological training at London College of Divinity. In 1966, he was called to serve as provincial secretary at a time of national uncertainties and tensions.

On January 25, 1969, Luwum was consecrated and enthroned as the bishop of Northern Uganda. Ford explains, "This was a period of great trial in his ministry. Church contributions were poor and the pastors could hardly get paid so they spent most of their time cultivating small gardens in order to feed their families, and failed to minister to their flock. There were really few committed leaders in the church in Northern Uganda." [2] Luwum invited a German group that initiated an agricultural project which he hoped would help to train local farmers and boost church income.

On January 25, 1971, Idi Amin staged a successful coup d'état. Right away, he began to murder many people belonging to the tribe that formed

the Northern Uganda Diocese. He expelled all the British and foreign nationals from the country so the German missionary group also had to leave without finishing their task. In spite of all these difficulties, Luwum maintained a calm and firm conviction of his faith. He organized evangelistic missions and encouraged pastors.

In May 1974, he was elected third archbishop of the Province of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire. He was consecrated on June 9, 1974. As head of the Anglican Church in four countries, Luwum worked tirelessly as the voice of the church in the region.

Conditions in the nation under Amin continued to worsen. Individuals and society as a whole were in a state of insecurity. Luwum felt there was a need for unity so, in order to address this situation, he initiated a meeting with all religious leaders, Christian and Muslim, to speak out with one voice against human rights abuses. At that meeting, they resolved to request a meeting with President Idi Amin. As Luwum was chair of this meeting, Amin marked him as his archenemy and began to monitor him.

Luwum continued to be the voice of the voiceless. He also encouraged and challenged pastors to take the risk of being wrong rather than staying silent and safe. His elder son, talking about how he saw his father, said, "As a pastor, he was involved in Bible translation, fully involved in evangelism, built schools and encouraged parents to take their children to school, and fully encouraged development. He was a nationalist and patriotic. He spoke out for the rights of all Ugandans. No wonder he lost his life for the sake of the nation." [3]

As a true and faithful servant, Luwum devoted his life to full-time church ministry. He spent himself to such an extent that he had practically nowhere to lay his head; and when he died, the church had to find shelter for his widow and children.

Luwum cared for all people and carried them in his heart. For example, he started a warfare relief program for those families and individuals who were affected by the regime. Many feared going back home (e.g. students who were at school at the time their parents and relations were killed by soldiers) for fear of being abducted. To this day, the program still exists.

Luwum was a leading voice in criticizing the excesses of the Idi Amin regime as he came to know more of the brutality of the regime, and as the people looked up to him for moral support and material assistance. He presented a formidable force which Amin, who could not stand any challenge, determined to have checked.

On February 5, 1977, to protest the policies of arbitrary killings and unexplained disappearances of the educated individuals from the Christian faith (mainly Protestants), Luwum and fellow bishops of the Church of Uganda issued a pastoral letter addressed to President Amin which read, in part:

Furthermore, we are made sad by the increasing forces that are setting Ugandans one against the other. While it is common in Uganda for members of one family to be members of different religious organizations, there is an increasing feeling that one particular religious organization is favored more than any other. So much so that in some parts of Uganda, members of Islam, who are in leading positions, are using these positions to coerce Christians into becoming Muslims.

Secondly, members of security forces are sons of civilians and they have civilians as brothers and sisters. When they begin to use the gun in their hands to destroy instead of protecting civilians, then the relationship of mutual trust and respect is destroyed.

The gun, which was meant to protect Uganda as a nation, the Ugandans as citizens, and their property, is increasingly being used against the Ugandan to take away life and property. [4]

Luwum personally delivered this note of protest to Dictator Idi Amin. Shortly afterwards, the archbishop and other leading churchmen were accused of treason.

Consequently, on February 16, 1977, Luwum was arrested together with two cabinet ministers, Erinayo Wilson Oryena and Charles Oboth Ofumbi, and a few other suspects, paraded forth to read out “confessions” implicating the three men. The archbishop was accused of planning to stage a coup. The next day, Radio Uganda announced that the three had been killed when the car transporting them to an interrogation center had collided with another vehicle. However, when Luwum's body was released to his relatives, it was riddled with bullets. Henry Kyemba, Minister of Health in Amin's government, wrote in his book, *A State of Blood*, “The bodies were bullet-riddled. The archbishop had been shot through the mouth and [had] at least three bullets in the chest.” [5] *Time Magazine* stated that “some reports even had it that Amin himself had pulled the trigger, but Amin angrily denied the charge, and there were, of course, no first-hand witnesses.” [6]

Why did Luwum get involved in all this? The truth is he had a high sense of responsibility as a leader and as a committed Christian—a Christian leader whose faith in Christ made him love justice and obey his Master's call to lay down his life for others. He dared to challenge evil and in doing so, he laid down his life for the Ugandan people.

Luwum was survived by a widow, Mary Lawinyo Luwum, and nine children. He is recognized as a martyr by the Anglican Communion.

John Kateeba Tumwine

Notes:

1. Margaret Ford, *Janani: The Making of a Martyr*, p.21-22.
2. *Ibid*, pp.22-27, 32-33.
3. Ben Okello Luwum interview.
4. Pastoral letter of the Bishops of the Church of Uganda to Amin, Feb. 5, 1977.
5. Henry Kyemba, *A State of Blood*.
6. "Amin: The Wild Man of Africa," *Time Magazine*.

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This story, received in 2010, was written by Rev. Canon John Kateeba Tumwine, formerly director of Global South Institute at Uganda Christian University and coordinator of regional theological colleges in the Church of Uganda.

The Defender of the Good News: Questioning Lamin Sanneh

“The Yale historian and missiologist talks about his conversion, Muslim-Christian relations, Anglican troubles, and the future of Christianity”

Jonathan J. Bonk/ OCTOBER 1, 2003

Lamin Sanneh is the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity and professor of history at Yale Divinity School. Gambian born, Sanneh is descended from the Nyanchos, an ancient African royal line. As such, his earliest education, in the Gambia, was with fellow chiefs' sons. Following graduation from the University of London with a Ph.D. in Islamic History, he taught at the University of Ghana and at the University of Aberdeen, in Scotland. He served for eight years as Assistant and Associate Professor of the History of Religion at Harvard University, before moving to Yale University in 1989. The author of a dozen books and scores of articles, he is an editor-at-large for *The Christian Century* and a contributing editor for the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

Among his many books, the one that has perhaps made the deepest impact is *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Orbis 1989), in which he argues that—contrary to the folklore that passes for social science, and in sharp contrast to Islam—Christianity preserves indigenous life and culture, thanks to its emphasis on mother-tongue translation. Where indigenous culture has been strong, it has absorbed Christian life and worship, thereby sustaining and even increasing its vitality. Where conversion has been to Islam, on the other hand, indigenous cultures have tended to be weak, and soon lose entirely the capacity to think religiously in their mother tongue. The difference lies in the Christian missionary insistence upon translation, on the one hand, and diffusion as the Muslim missionary *modus operandi*. The converse, he argues, is also true.

Sanneh and his wife, Sandra, have one son, Kelefa, and a daughter, Sia.

Jonathan Bonk is the executive director of the *Overseas Ministries Study Center*, editor of the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, and project director for the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*.

Did you find that Christians welcomed you with open arms once you had declared your desire to convert?

On the contrary. The church was suspicious and distrustful.

Could you elaborate just a little more on that point?

Unofficially, the Methodist church in question welcomed my decision to seek baptism, but officially they put off the decision to baptize me.

They asked instead that I to go to the Catholic Church, which I did for a year, but with the same result, I found.

The Catholics also appeared reluctant, and suspicious, too, it seemed. I had hit an ecumenical obstacle. In mitigation, the Methodist church

assured me that their baptism, when they did it, would be recognized by the Catholic Church. I expressed relief at what seemed like hedging your bets and doubling the favorable odds at the same time. It still took two years to accomplish the object in view, and only because I gave an ultimatum, though the Methodist church added the precaution of readings on New Testament form criticism for my catechism. Away with any risk of the Bible being taken, like the Qur'an, as the impeccable word of God!

That precaution of a rational, progressive understanding of Christianity appeared to have failed when, with my interest still obviously undiminished, I requested to be allowed to study theology. I received a swift negative response, with the indication that the decision was backed by the mission headquarters in London (in case I harbored a stubborn thought I had any remaining support there).

Those were the unvarnished facts that I, as a very young convert, had to deal with (or not deal with, if I chose). It happened that I was so profoundly affected by the message of Jesus, so inexplicably transformed at the roots of faith and trust, that I felt myself in the grips of an undeniable impetus to give myself to God, whatever my ultimate career path. I never had cause to fret about the work to which God might call me; so steadfast are God's promises.

Following your conversion, what did you most miss about Islam?

I am not sure "miss" is the right word, but I acquired a deep appreciation for Islam, for its sense of divine transcendence, for my own formation in its moral milieu, for the habits of obedience and faithfulness it transcribed in me, and for the idea it inculcated of the truth and reality of God in human affairs. We should remember that while God and Jesus are swear words in the West, that is not so in the Muslim world. People would never take the name of God and God's prophets in vain. We need a dose of Islam's reverence to keep us honest about our own faith. We need each other for that if for no other reason.

Why did you finally move into communion with the Roman Catholic Church, after your long sojourn as a Protestant?

The Catholic Church eventually relented after years of ignoring and wishing me away! In that time the Protestant church had remained, for the most part, incredulous of me.

I do not know the reason for that. It could be cultural, it could be liberal distrust of religion, it could be residual hostility toward converts as illegitimate fruits of mission, it could be unfamiliarity with non-white people, it could be presumptions about my political motives and leanings, it could be any or all of the above—how do I know? But, whatever it was, it wore me down eventually.

I felt my reasons for being a Christian had little resonance with the reasons a liberal West gives for the Christian name. I remember on a visit to Germany from Africa when I was on school vacation seeing the sign, "The

Episcopal Church Welcomes You,” and duly betaking myself there one Sunday only to discover I was unwelcome! My secular white American friend felt vindicated about why he ceased to be a practicing Christian. It was all one big cultural pretense, he said. Don’t get literal with Christian slogans. There would be no questions asked if I was white, he observed caustically.

I realized that a cultural paradigm had usurped the place of God in our enlightened scheme of things, and that was one reason why for so long the church tried to make me feel guilty and untrustworthy for claiming the Christian name. With my religious orientation, however, I was unable to reconcile myself to that fundamental compromise with the world. I thought Jesus was for real in spite of the prevarications of the church.

How would you describe the present state of your relationships with your immediate and extended Muslim families?

It is a complicated one. The African members of my extended family have little conception of my world, little idea of the milieu of my life and work and the expanding network of friends and colleagues spread across the world. For many of them, the West is the land of riches, and so it appears implausible to them that anyone could be said to be successful who was also not successful in the financial sense. I am often tempted to lecture them about mortgages, college tuition, about the insurance Leviathan that engulfs home, car, body, limb and teeth, about fuel and utility bills, or about Uncle Sam’s long and heavy hands on our wages and our spending. An occasionally sympathetic listener might say perceptively, “but you don’t own yourself anymore,” but otherwise it is a futile exercise. The love of money is a universal desire, admittedly, but being in America turns it into a prerequisite. It trumps everything else.

It is impossible to overcome such expectations about being successful in America, but continuing family demands require an ongoing relationship unconstrained by that. So I have maintained contact, with the occasional visit and exchange of news and gifts.

How does your experience play into your understanding of Muslim-Christian dialogue?

The responsibility of the church to respond positively to the Muslim challenge I see as constitutive of the Christian response to God. I remain convinced that the church will emerge renewed and revitalized from that challenge.

What do you think about current missionary efforts to evangelize Muslims?

I am sure evangelizing Muslims will make more of an impression on the Christian evangelizers themselves than on the Muslim world. Given the extent of indifference and complacency about the religious life among Christians, it is perhaps a good thing if they are shaken out of that torpor,

however circuitous the path by which they arrive at that awakening. In the aggregate, Muslims will continue to pay them scant attention.

What are among the most serious misunderstandings that Muslims typically hold regarding Christians?

Several misunderstandings leap to mind at random. Muslims believe that Christians:

- have no revealed language for revelation and so are divided by the languages of the world;
- deny the oneness of God by their trinity;
- labor under the misapprehension that Jesus was crucified when, according to the Qur'an, he was not;
- without a mandate like the *salát* of Islam, follow their own whim in the worship of God;
- have no revealed law and so cannot know or follow the truth;
- blaspheme when they call Jesus the Son of God instead of the son of Mary, as Muslims say;
- have abandoned the Mosaic code on dietary practice and the Sabbath;
- are unfaithful to the teachings of God's prophets, including those of Jesus, concerning obedience and unity of faith and practice;
- are in error when they separate church and state with the goal of reducing religion to the private and subjective level;
- have turned to the nation state as an object of worship and for which they give their lives;
- give citizenship and patriotism primacy over allegiance to God;
- promote religion as personal, emotional assurance without reference to society and the world, as if it is enough to say religion is grace, which is nothing other than religion as a vague, general aspiration without the means or method to implement it, or the space to practice it;
- practice a religion that is without a home or a promise land, and so have little respect for Islam as a religion at home still in its birthplace while prevailing in many other places besides.

How is the Muslim faith most frequently misunderstood in the West?

Comparable misunderstandings of Islam in the West include the beliefs that Islam:

- is a violent religion that breeds terror;
- is intolerant of other religions;
- oppresses women;
- is a religion of laws and rules rather than of grace;

- uses jihad to spread itself;
- unites church and state to breed intolerance, fanaticism, and conflict;
- restricts revelation to a book instead of to a person;
- was founded by a man who used violence as a weapon;
- encourages polygamy.

Samuel Huntington speaks in terms of a “clash of civilizations,” and says that one of the fault lines is between Christendom and the world of Islam. How do you respond?

As a statement of fact the point is incontestable. You could extend it to other fault lines, such as those between Islam and Hinduism, between Islam and the non-Muslim populations of south Sudan, Islam and the fault line in Mindanao and in Ache, in Bosnia, in Chechnya, and so on. Bernard Lewis (who first put the idea forward in an *Atlantic Monthly* article) had in mind the cleavage between Islam and the modern West, saying that is the fault line we need to watch as the place of some of the fiercest conflicts in coming years.

After 9/11 it is hard to argue with that forecast. The challenge now is what to do about it. Continuing conflict is unsustainable and unacceptable, so we have to promote a dialogue of civilizations as the alternative. I am uncertain as to whether the West is prepared to do that if it requires acceptance and commitment to the West’s own core values as the basis of encounter. There is too strong a secular antipathy to Christianity for the West to mobilize as a coherent society. Notice the strength of the culture wars in the churches themselves.

How would you compare Christianity as it is understood and practiced in Africa and in North America?

The main difference I see is the difference between a post-Christian American society and a post-Western Christianity rising in Africa and elsewhere. The one is in decline, at least intellectually, and the other is in spate. The taming of Christianity in North America requires very different tools from those required by the conditions favoring expansion in Africa. Christians are not afraid to go to church for prayer and healing when they are ill, for instance, whereas in North America prayers may be said for people who are ill but only in absentia.

Africans trust God for their spiritual, physical, social, and medical needs; Americans don’t.

Has your thinking changed since you published *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* 14 years ago?

The central message of that book and of much of the rest of my related work is that as a translated religion, Christianity through history became a force for translation and innovation. This had important consequences not just for the church, but for culture generally.

Christianity is invested in languages and cultures that existed for purposes other than for Christianity, including the names by which local people call God. To that extent, Christianity has been anticipated, and to that extent, too, it has fulfilled the potential of cultures. Christianity has not so much been divided by the languages of the world as that it has been enriched by them, and enriching them in turn. The overwhelming majority of the world's languages have a dictionary and a grammar at all because of the modern missionary movement. With such systematic documentation the affected cultures could promote themselves in unprecedented and unsuspecting ways. More people pray and worship in more languages in Christianity than in any other religion.

When you come to reflect on it, it is staggering to think how much work remains still to be done in the scholarly study of vernacular Bible translation, given the place it has occupied in history.

You attended the Anglican Communion's Lambeth Conference in 1998, when there was such a marked difference between the agendas of the African bishops and those of their North American counterparts. What do you think is the future of the Anglican global communion?

Senior churchmen at Lambeth spoke of how Third World Christians, bankrolled by conservative groups in the United States, were set to promote a reactionary cultural agenda.²⁴ Implicated in the crisis of national political breakdown, the old-line churchmen claimed, the new Christian leaders would foment witch-hunts of enemies and opponents as happened in the pre-Enlightenment West.

Angry at the Third World bishops for their anti-gay stance at Lambeth, Bishop John Shelby Spong of Newark, for example, declared in a remark that caused outrage and for which he issued a half-hearted apology afterwards that the witch-hunting and superstitious societies from which these bishops came represented a threat to the Anglican Church as a force of Western civilization. What he saw and heard at Lambeth, he subsequently reaffirmed, "was the sunset of the Anglican communion."

This is not just an instance of the West defining itself against Christianity, but also, more tellingly, of a post-Christian West, still recovering from seeing religion as contagion, mobilizing behind a domesticated highbrow view of culture for safeguard.

At Lambeth itself, and subsequently, there was widespread consternation among Western bishops that the Third World bishops seemed misguided enough to think that the Bible could replace enlightened reasonableness as a standard of guidance and Christian teaching. The unprecedented large conversions taking place in Africa and elsewhere were

²⁴ On Sanneh's use of the term "Third World," see *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Orbis Books, 2009), 122.

viewed as unwelcome resistance in the path of the West's cultural juggernaut.

The West limits its role in the new Christianity to taking precautions against too close an encounter with it. According to many church leaders, the Anglican Church is threatened with a major schism in the foreseeable future. The extraordinary irony is that Anglicanism has never been stronger, never more appealing and more global in membership than at present. In the mystery of God, you wonder whether that energy will find other channels rather than dissipate entirely.

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1. In the fourteen years since the initial interview was conducted, have you observed any shift in the ways in which Muslims and Christians perceive each other?

Answer: The politics of interreligious relations have hardened in the United States, with the idea of a Muslim ban gaining traction in the mainstream. Political opposition to Islam, however, contrasts sharply with the academic inroads of Islam in colleges and universities in the U.S. Large numbers of academic positions have been created and filled in Islamic Studies in the last fifteen years or so more than in all of the prior decades.

On the question of whether the churches have struck a different path in relations with Muslims, it is revealing that the majority of self-declared Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, voted on the side of the Muslim ban in the 2016 Presidential election despite the opposition of many religious leaders. I hope it is not too naïve to imagine that the churches should be able to shepherd Christians in this and other areas rather than sheepishly following political fashion.

I confess to a personal disappointment on this subject. Scholarly research on Islam has been impressive while Christian theological study has been largely reflective and introvert. There are exceptions, such as Kenneth Cragg and W. Montgomery Watt, among others, but much of that religious scholarship remains inexplicably unacknowledged. I appreciate the argument that Christians must be engaged in politics for all the well-rehearsed reasons we know, but I am skeptical of the conventional logic of that engagement. It is not religious engagement when churches drift with the political current, using headline calculations to becloud moral and ethical considerations. That is religious capitulation where religion is held captive to political reason. It would be difficult to reverse course and hold politicians to account once the religious ground is ceded. Astute as they are as children of this world, politicians know that truth. The vagaries of political wheeling and dealing will reduce religious people to treating crumbs of political favor occasionally thrown in their way as manna from heaven. It is little wonder that many Christians are moved by the political tide more than they are by religious teaching: political party affiliation often determines one's religious views.

As the moral conscience of society, however, religion must maintain its moral and institutional independence both for reasons of its own reputation and as a check on political dogmatism. We need a living faith to resist the force of unjust political compliance. With apologies to Voltaire, governments need shepherds and butchers for a proper balance between common security and general benevolence, and without shepherds, governments will be the butchers, making benevolence dispensable. At its core, freedom is a spiritual principle because it belongs with the free conscience, i.e., the conscience unfettered by coercion or blackmail. As the Gospel Canticle expressed it, this “was the oath [God] swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear...all the days of our lives.” (Lk. 1: 73-75.) The free conscience is the tribunal of faith and witness of sovereign truth, and without that our relations with Muslims and with others will be skewed. The Muslim ban will not change that; it will merely deceive us into thinking it will. It would be more than a personal disappointment if religion were to leave us that much at the mercy of political manipulation.

2. You initiated the [Oxford Studies in World Christianity](#) series of publications a decade ago. Could you tell us about this initiative? What does it hope to achieve? What progress has it made? Where is it going?

Answer: The Oxford Studies in World Christianity series (OSWC) was conceived in response to the resurgence of Christianity outside the West. The series is guided by two main considerations. The first is to bring fresh attention to Christianity as a world religion that is in active interface with the diverse cultures and societies of the world, and the second is to provide a frame for re-engaging conversion and appropriation of faith in light of Christian origins and the massive changes occurring today.

In addition to the standard each volume sets of style, coverage, and interpretation, the OSWC intends to stimulate related initiatives in promoting the subject. For that reason, it is gratifying to see that other publication ventures have come into being, so that today we have in process growing publishing commitments to the field as well as the creation of faculty positions in Universities and colleges as well as in seminaries and theological institutions around the world. Admittedly, old school attitudes still persist in some quarters, with residual resistance expressing itself in many ways, subtle and obvious. Terms like Christendom, Global Christianity, Non-Western Christianity, and World Christianities have survived or have surfaced, but with less conviction, and certainly with much defensiveness. Variety and diversity are intrinsic to Christianity from the beginning rather than being the products only of contemporary globalization. As names, Jesus of the Hebrews and Christ of the Greeks have combined to stamp and propel a faith destined for adoption by the peoples of the world.

In a clutch the OSWC has thus made considerable gains in terms of

raising scholarly awareness and standards, in terms of new academic positions being established, the publication of scholarly literature, including journals, books, and encyclopedias, and in terms of a scholarly trend that has been acquiring momentum. We have much work to do still. OSWC is still short of the number of volumes we proposed in the original contract with the publisher. We have one volume still stuck in the editorial pipeline, one proposal that is very well developed waiting for another publisher to take on, two very promising proposals still waiting for action, and two more to be developed with the right authorship. I beg leave here to acknowledge the generosity of the Lundman Family Trust for their support of this initiative.

I dare to think that anyone looking over the record of what has been accomplished so far will agree that a great deal of ground has been gained. When I came to Yale World Christianity was scarcely visible on the academic radar. Today we have fairly clear outlines of the field, with sectors being actively assigned and put to work, new fields opening up and finding a respected place on the academic landscape, and an impressive intercontinental network of scholarly consultation and collaboration initiated under the aegis of the Yale-Edinburgh Group of scholars, now enjoying its silver jubilee. Partnerships and collaborative projects have flourished in this milieu.

When we embarked on it, Professor Andrew Walls and I could never have imagined we would be presiding over an energetic consultation patronized by a growing body of students and scholars going on twenty-five years. I hope my colleagues share my view that the contours of the subject have been soundly enough laid down by now to allow us to contemplate that in due season the harvest will come in abundance, thanks to the multiplying effect of the present committed resources. We have the accomplishment of our forerunners for encouragement and guidance, giving a glimpse of where the religion is heading in fulfillment of the promises of Scripture. With Christ at the center, Christianity in its worldwide impact will yet achieve the diverse, inclusive dimensions of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 22-27).

3. Can you tell us about your most recent publication, [Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam](#) (OUP 2016)? Why did you feel compelled to write such a book, and what are your hopes for it?

Answer: *Beyond Jihad* was long in the making and in the telling. It was an extremely laborious undertaking, and my ambivalence made it even more protracted, perhaps needlessly so. I spent decades in research and thinking about the subject, constrained by the failure to obtain grants and by the patient inquiry required to align the sources scattered across Arabic, French and field sources. Also I imagined that my earlier book and articles on the pacifist heritage in Muslim Africa would be enough to put the subject to rest. However, my frustration grew as I came to realize that scholars were slow to acknowledge the argument that the jihad reputation that Islam shed in its

African phase in order to advance by peaceful demonstration in teaching and public witness may have implications for the religion's grand historical narrative. As magistrates of the study of change in human affairs, historians, however, are themselves slow to change. I don't know if that opens history to intrusion from the disciplines involved in social studies where *explanatory theories* based on cause and effect rule the roost. Explanation has dogged history with a prediction complex. At any rate, the nineteenth century jihads that rose and fell in controversy left peaceful advocates holding the field, with historians looking the other way. It made work for me.

While paying lip service to the religion's complex and diverse character, scholars nevertheless seemed reluctant to accept this peaceful impulse of Islam's diverse and complex heritage. I needed to draw on that peaceful theme and its place in Islam's classical heritage before pursuing it in regions outside West Africa in order to challenge the set attitudes of old school historians. The demand to securitize Islam in the post 9/11 world reinforced jihad's privileged place in the world of intelligence analysts, and scholars lined up appropriately; it made me resolved to challenge the ascendant jihad hypothesis, and *Beyond Jihad* was the response.

There are countless studies examining different aspects of Islam, from established classics to a growing list of insightful original scholarly works, all of that representing an impressive library. I am not competing with this achievement; rather, I wrote *Beyond Jihad* eager to engage scholars in helping identify this pacifist theme in the expansion of Islam from its origin to its roots in multicultural societies in West Africa and elsewhere. Instead of performing to order in the world of security studies, scholars should pay attention to Islam as a complex global faith of peaceful resilience and endurance. Whatever the security agenda, we must expound this impressive pacifist heritage in terms that are recognizable to the religion's followers.

4. In the face of the seemingly relentless and swelling tide of bad news that swamps our perceptions and distorts our perspectives, what gives you hope?

Answer: There are few gifts given to us as human beings and as religious people more precious than hope, understood here as trust in the forward leading of the Spirit. With hope, faithful endurance and loving forgiveness are possible, and without it recrimination, revenge, and reprisal become routine. Hope persists against cruelty and despair, and induces patience and wisdom in the face of overweening power and cruelty.

I have visited communities of faith across the world, and have often been struck by the tenacity of their faith against extraordinary odds. I shall always remember my meeting with the Anglican bishop of Birmingham, England, who was held as a prisoner of war in a Japanese camp where he was subjected to terrible torture. Battered and bruised, he remained uncowed, unbroken. Suffering is not alien to the religion, as we see in the tragedy that

has continued to befall minority Christian communities across the world. Except for a few areas in the Third World, including the Philippines, Third World Christians often are vulnerable, and in extreme cases those who survive continue to face persecution, discrimination, and exile. It calls to mind the words of Scripture: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God, and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed....So we do not lose heart.” (2 Cor. 4: 7-9, 16.) Victim communities continue to hold dear their hope and joy in the Gospel, and their witness deserves a claim on our attention support.

I said in the original interview that readers must be inspired to embrace the future because God has preceded us there and is bidding us to heed and to follow. The sentiment is worth reiterating, this time with a new sense of urgency, but also with gratitude for God’s faithfulness. You refer to the current swelling tide of depressing news, and I suppose for Americans who are weighed down by the current divisiveness of our politics and the truculence of negative sentiments, it is pertinent to recall a time when the country faced disaster and tragedy far more divisive than anything confronting us now, and emerged with hope.

In the midst of the Civil War Lincoln reflected on what possible lessons Americans could draw from the unprecedented tragedy before them. He asked: “Shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” Lincoln channeled hope to allay America’s distress rather than giving up against a tide of grisly facts and events, drawing the lesson that, with purpose animating it, life is always painting a picture, not doing a sum, in the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes. As Americans look for a Lincoln-like spirit at a time of low national morale churches, similarly, must take up the challenge to foster public confidence in the Gospel. Our survival as a civilization depends on that confidence.

Hope is not a measure of the success we have in making the world bend and turn at our word. Hope is anchored in the assurance of our future. Despite the odds, God will not forsake us (Ps. 94:14), and it would be folly of the supreme kind to forsake that hope.

5. When you were interviewed in 2003, you were asked to share one piece of advice with your readers. Would you change today what you said fourteen years ago?

Answer: Given the audience you have in view it would be appropriate to direct my remarks to the readership in Africa and elsewhere and, if I may, take editorial license to expand my observations beyond just one piece of advice. The momentum of post-Western Christianity presses on us an urgent question of great promise about the role of the church in new emerging societies beyond the West where the dominant cultural symbols happen to be pre-Christian. These symbols are renewed now by the hope of the Gospel, inspiring believers to reassemble the fragments of scattered memories and broken lives into a living hope strong enough to leaven the old ways. The design of the new society that is being laid in the hearts and minds of believers is distinguished by the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5: 22-23). The ancestors would not starve in their tombs just because blood has ceased to call blood; the water of baptism has power to indemnify and to restore.

Properly trained and equipped, believers can address the challenges of the day, and resist the temptation to make national and tribal politics the arbiter of faith and the moral life. The search for a new social order must be pursued through redemptive stewardship; that search should remind us that the sovereignty of political power is transcended and constrained by the sovereignty of God, with the religious conscience the basis of accountability and the spur of charitable living.

It is the paramount duty of the church to form the moral conscience as an attribute of leadership and citizenship; the growing influence of religion in post-Western Christian societies should move those societies to apply lessons of civic virtue and justice to the demands of an inclusive free society. There is great opportunity today to strengthen civil society as a safeguard of the common interest, with the important reminder that politics will flourish only when, as a sacred trust of the people, power is subject to the witness of the moral conscience. Even in the midst of great material need, there is an obligation to heed the maxim of the Gospel that “Man does not live by bread alone” (Mt. 4:4). The appetite for material things should not enslave us and render us tone deaf to the moral distinction between need and greed. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3).

Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Bamunoba, Yoram K. *Development of the Anglican Church in West Ankole 1900-1990. Tracing the Link Between the Church and the State.* Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2015. \$32.00 Meabooks.com. ISBN: 9970255525 / 9789970255528

“The Development of the Anglican Church in West Ankole 1900-1990 puts the Anglican Church in West Ankole into context. It analyses the intricacy of the church-state relationship by providing an account of spiritual life in pre-Christian Ankole and after the advent of Christianity.

Since its introduction in Uganda, the Anglican Church has continued to be bound up with the state, sometimes thriving under it and sometimes coming under fire from it.

Under the British colonial administration, the Anglican Church attracted a number of followers largely on the basis of the promise it held out to the locals for economic and political advantages as well as social welfare. Ironically, when faced with persecution, such as under Idi Amin’s regime, the Anglican Church congregations swelled and became more devout. Yet where the church had the support and tacit blessing of the state, differences in ideology among the stakeholders emerged that made it difficult for the church to thrive.

In this account relating to an important period of the Anglican Church in West Ankole, the author leverages his personal experiences and insights as well as a literature review to add a very important chapter to the narrative on the Anglican Church and Christianity in Uganda.” (Back cover)

Communities of Faith in Africa and the African Diaspora: In Honor of Dr. Tite Tiénou with Additional Essays on World Christianity. Edited by Casely B. Essamuah and David K. Ngaruiya. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013. \$35.84. Amazon.com ISBN: 162032959X / 978-1620329597

“*Communities of Faith* is a collection of essays on the multicultural Christian spirit and practices of churches around the world, with particular attention to Africa and the African diaspora. The essays span history, theology, anthropology, ecumenism, and missiology.

Readers will be treated to fresh perspectives on African Pentecostal higher education, Pentecostalism and witchcraft in East Africa, Methodist camp meetings in Ghana, Ghanaian diaspora missions in Europe and North America, gender roles in South African Christian communities, HIV/AIDS ministries in Uganda, Japanese funerary rites, enculturation and contextualization principles of mission, and many other aspects of the Christian world mission.

With essays from well-known scholars as well as young and emerging men and women in academia, *Communities of Faith* illuminates current realities of world Christianity and contributes to the scholarship of today's worldwide Christian witness." ([Amazon](#))

Oduro, Thomas. Christ Holy Church International: 1947-2002. Lutheran University Press, 2007. \$27.90 [AbeBooks.com](#) ISBN 10: 1932688277 ISBN 13: 9781932688276

"The author explores and examines the history, beliefs, practices, and growth of Christ Holy Church International, an African Independent Church in Nigeria, founded by Agnes Okoh, an illiterate woman who, while returning from a market in 1943, heard a voice repeatedly saying , "Matthew Ten." Agnes Okoh, a marginalized woman and a widow, was able to found and lead an itinerant evangelistic team of 12 members in 1947 as the movement grew into a church with nearly 800 congregations by 2002. The history of that church in a pluralistic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic Nigeria is the focus of this book." (Synopsis, [Abebooks](#))

Otunnu, Olara. Archbishop Janani Luwum: The Life and Witness of a 20th Century Martyr. Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, [2015]. \$2.80 [Fountain Publishers](#). ISBN: 978-9970-25-553-5

"Not much has been written about St. Janani Luwum, the Ugandan Archbishop who was brutally murdered by the regime of Idi Amin in 1977. This book introduces this committed servant of God going over the details of his formative years, education and work in church, and the circumstances of his murder. Written especially through first-hand accounts, the story is intimate and wholly illuminating." (O. Otunnu)

Open Access: Theses and Articles

Namusoke, Sarah. The Role of women in the Administration of the Anglican Church in Uganda, with Special Reference to Namirembe Diocese. Master of Arts, University of Nairobi, 1990.

Abstract: This thesis is a study on the role that women play in the administration of the Anglican Church in Uganda, with particular reference to Namirembe diocese. It analyses the participation of women in the church's administration and the factors that affect it. This study was carried out mainly because of the increased awareness of the importance of women in the development process throughout the world, as well as the increased concern about the minimal participation of women in the decision-making bodies - both in governments and non-governmental organizations. In the church, the on-going debate on the ordination of women to priesthood reflects this concern. The basic objectives of the study were mainly to find out whether women's participation in the administration of the church has been influenced by the Bible, which is the basis of the church; and also by African cultures in

which the church was planted. It was also intended to find out how the nature of the administrative structure has influenced the participation of women within it.

The field research for this study was carried out in Namirembe diocese, with the intention to find out people's views about the role of women in the church, particularly in administration. Three categories of people were interviewed - the clergy, lay-women and lay-men. Some church records were also studied and some meetings attended with the purpose of ascertaining the actual participation of women in the church. All this, together with the literature studied, led to the findings of this study.

The findings are basically three. The first is that Kiganda culture has had a strong influence on the role of women in the Anglican Church in Uganda. The traditional view that women's subordinate role in matters of leadership is God-given is very prevalent in the church today, where it is often backed up by usually one-sided literal interpretations of Bible passages which concern women. This aspect is clearly dealt with in chapters three and four of this study. The second finding is that although women are very active in the church as members of the congregations, and as the ones most responsible for the economic sustenance and social life of the church, they are lacking in the decision-making bodies of the church. This is considered in chapter five, in which the role of women in the Anglican Church in Uganda, both in history and today, is discussed. Thirdly, the nature of the administrative structure of Church of Uganda (which is dealt with in chapter six) is such that women have little chance to participate in its administration. This is because many of the church's administrative bodies are open to priests more than the laity for participation. There are no women priests in Namirembe diocese.

The suggestions for further action arising from this study all revolve around a call for change in outlook. The church in general, needs to change its attitude towards women's role in the church. The leadership, in particular, needs to change the administrative structure so that women's chances for participation in church leadership are enhanced.

Odili, Jones Ugochukwu. Drums and voices from the grassroots: local women and the Hallelujah Chorus among Anglican churches in Ukwuaniland, Delta State, Nigeria, 1841-1941. Article. UNISA, 2012. <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/6607>

Abstract: From the mid-19th century a certain consistent and encrusted paradigm in African Christian historiography emerged, lamenting the voicelessness of the roles local people played in the evangelisation of their kith and kin during the modern missionary enterprise in that region. In their bid to sing of the unsung roles of indigenous agents in that enterprise, the high pitch of androcentricism drowned a vital but marginalised note.

Using Ogbu Kalu's (2005) theoretical framework (the concentric approach) and the case study and historical approaches to the study of

religious phenomenon, this study echoes and reconstructs, from the grassroots, the gist of how indigenous, hitherto nameless Anglican women in their local communities encountered the power of the gospel. The study reveals that Ukwuani women understand Anglicanism through indigenous categories and gives credence and authenticity to the indispensability of grassroots women in the universal choir of Christianity. It recommends that local women should be taken seriously in African Christian historiography.

Wilson, Kisekka. A contextual interpretation of Archbishop Janani Luwum's model of non-violence resistance and church-state relations in contemporary Uganda. Masters Degree (Biblical & Historical Studies). University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008. <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/952>

Abstract: This thesis is aimed at making a contextual interpretation of Luwum's model of non-violent resistance and church-state relations in contemporary Uganda. The thesis reconstructs Archbishop Luwum's life and explores the roots and the formative factors that shaped his thoughts and actions. It notes that the influence of the Acholi culture, early school life, the early Ugandan martyrs, Balokole theology, his theological studies, his ecclesiastical position, his parents and the writings and works of Martin Luther King Jr. shaped and refined his worldview. All of these factors provided grounding for his political and theological articulations of non-violent resistance and church-state relations. The thesis argues the principles of non-violent resistance are in harmony with the Christian understanding of shalom. Thus the church which upholds the principle of justice, love, truth and suffering will find non-violent resistance models an important tool for fighting injustices. With regard to injustice in the Ugandan context the thesis identifies and examined Amin's ghosts such as the politics of dominance, corruption; a militaristic tradition and a culture of guns, religious conflicts and other problems which have continued to haunt the current Uganda. All of these can be confronted by the church using non-violence resistance model. The study argues that if this is going to be effective, the Anglican Church needs to embrace a pastoral hermeneutic based on non-violence resistance which can enable the church to be involved in social transformation without being co-opted by the state. In view of this, the study finds that through the principles of the non-violence resistance model the church can advocate for reconciliation and for the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to facilitate healing, confessing the past atrocities, identifying of victims and model of non-violence. To make recommendations for possible reparation, and processing the application for amnesty and indemnity so as to prevent the future human rights violations. This will be the beginning of fostering reconciliation in Uganda and establishing justice using non-violent means.

