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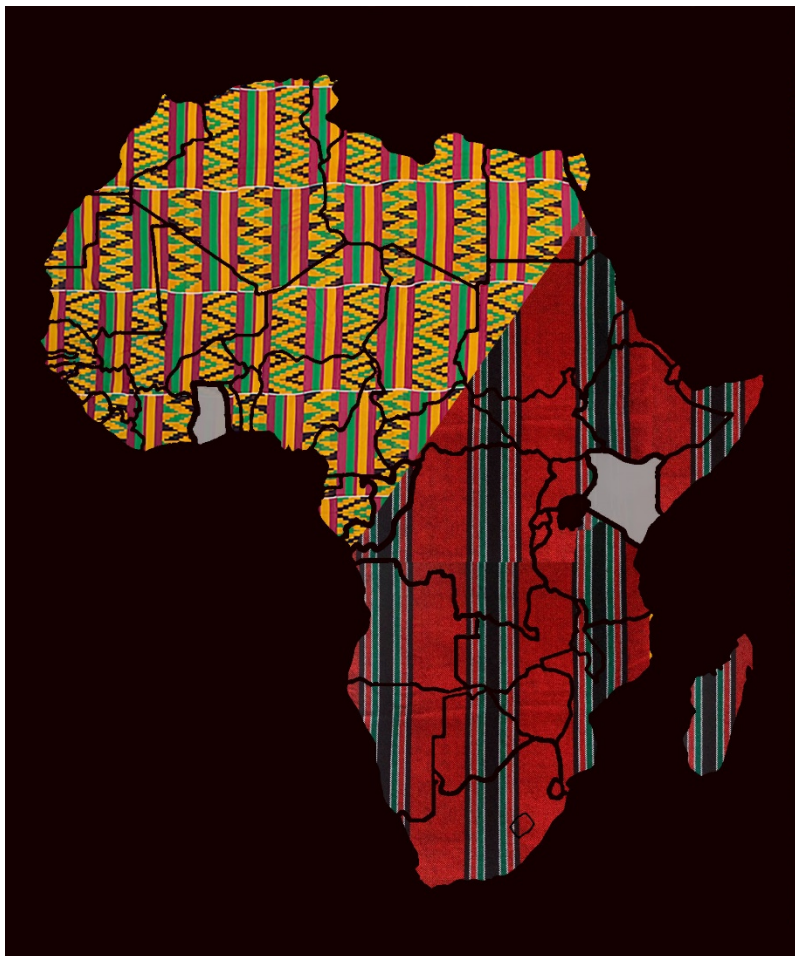
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Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jan. 2021)

Focus:

George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna
(Kenya); Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba
(Gold Coast); Casely Essamuah
(interview)



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The *Journal of African Christian Biography* was launched in 2016 to complement and make stories from the online *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (www.DACB.org) more readily accessible and immediately useful in African congregations and classrooms.

Now published quarterly, with all issues available online, the intent of the *JACB* is to promote the research, publication, and use of African Christian biography within Africa by serving as an academically credible but publicly accessible source of information on Christianity across the continent. Content will always include biographies already available in the database itself, but original contributions related to African Christian biography or to African church history are also welcome. While the policy of the *DACB* itself has been to restrict biographical content to subjects who are deceased, the *JACB* also includes interviews with living African church leaders and academics.

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Introduction

By Michèle Miller Sigg

As a fitting start to 2021, this issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography* offers content that underlines, once again, the importance of restoring the historical record of African Christian pioneers. One article looks at the Orthodox Church in Kenya (twentieth century) and the other the nineteenth century legacy of the Basel Mission Society in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana).

First, Fr. Evangelos Thiani (DACB Editorial Board and JACB contributing editor) documents the life and ministry of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (1905-1987), considered by the local community to be the father of Orthodoxy in Kenya. In this act of historical recovery, he examines Gathuna's legacy in the Kenyan church as well as in the global Orthodox Church and asks two important questions: What kind of ecclesial recognition does Gathuna deserve? Does his record merit that he be considered for glorification in the Orthodox Church?

In the second article, Dr. Maureen Iheanacho draws from obscurity the forgotten stories of Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba, two indigenous agents whose unflagging efforts were essential to the Christianization of the Gold Coast through the work of the Basel Mission Society. After discovering that no one had ever heard of Kwabi and Saba even though a written record of their lives existed in the Basel Mission archives, Iheanacho emphasizes how crucial it is to pursue the intentional work of historical retrieval in the African Christian record.

Finally, our third article is an interview with Dr. Casely Baiden Essamuah, Secretary of Global Christian Forum. In his testimony, Essamuah describes how he has led a life of "building bridges for Christ and his kingdom" both in his previous ministry as mission pastor in the United States and now between churches on a global scale. At this time of division, polarization, fear, and isolation on a global scale, I cannot imagine a more important calling for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere.

Michèle Miller Sigg
Editor

Call for Ecclesial Recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (1905-1987), The Founding Father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya

By Fr. Evangelos Thiani¹

Introduction: Conflicting views on Bishop George and his legacy

The African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK), owes its formation and development to one Gikuyu man who later became an Orthodox priest and bishop. This man is Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna, considered and highly regarded by many locals as the father of Orthodoxy in Kenya, and an elder who impacted many Kenyans who joined Orthodoxy in the 20th century or who became priests and church leaders from his mentorship. On the other hand, Bishop George is considered a controversial leader by some of his fellow hierarchs and clergy. Such acclaimed controversies in his life led to his defrocking in 1979, causing a devastating schism in the AOCK, which was mainly resolved in 2004, leaving a few clergy and faithful still outside the canonical church of the ancient See of Saint Mark to this very day. This schism has determined how Bishop George has been regarded in Kenya, elsewhere and in past studies, and up to the present there has not been much consensus.

The life of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna has not for several reasons been documented comprehensively in the past. Some writers have focused on the AOCK contributions to non-religious matters like freedom fighting and the first independent schools in Kenya, and thus mentioned him only briefly. Those who have been focused on ecclesial matters seems to have either left out or been ignorant of Bishop George's contribution to the formation of the Orthodox Church in Kenya, if not highly biased towards his contributions. At the same time, most of these writers have not been interested in the local missionaries, either, but rather in the external ones. Thus, the existing studies about the AOCK by prominent missiologists, historians and theologians have mainly mentioned Bishop George in brief or completely failed to recognize his fundamental place in it, a reality in the works of locals and missionaries, with some only describing him as a controversial figure.

¹ Very. Rev. Protopresbyter Fr. Evangelos Thiani is a member of the Editorial Board of the DACB and a *JACB* Contributing Editor. This article, reprinted, with permission from *Ortodoksia* 59 (Vol 59, 2019), has been slightly abridged. For the full text, see the biography posted on DACB.org (forthcoming Feb. 2021).

The other reason for not featuring Bishop George in such studies could be the noted tension between his purported sainthood and controversial life. Such inclination on the question of whether Bishop George was an important figure in the history of this church or not, and what kind of a person he was, is even today debatable and dependent on what side of the divide of the 1979 schism the writers or those interviewed are. Unfortunately, most of the past studies done on the AOCK were written by people or on the basis of information provided by people who worked under the Alexandrian divide and none in Bishop George's divide. The hierarchs who have served Kenya mainly from Greece and Cyprus, with the exception of the current Metropolitan of Nairobi, have underrated or even forgotten the positive contribution of Bishop George in the formation and development of the AOCK. Furthermore, most of these past studies were mainly done before the church of Kenya was reunited in 2004 to end the stalemate after the 1979 schism.

After the substantial healing of the AOCK schism in 2004, it has become clear that those formerly in Bishop George's camp brushed off the controversial aspects of his life, while those in the Alexandrian camp could not write or say any good thing about Bishop George, both groups avoiding to give advantage to their opposing side. A few examples today tell it all. Interviews with personalities such as Rev. John Ngethe and Rev. Peter Michara who were interviewed by researchers before the unity and who previously gave negative testimonies of Bishop George that led to his defrocking, later gave a completely different, positive view of his life. The Orthodox Patriarchal Seminary, which was not teaching about Bishop George before the unity of the AOCK in 2004, has now incorporated his significant place and contribution in their missiology and history courses.

The current Metropolitan of Nairobi, Elder Makarios Tillyrides, who is also the current General Dean, and professor of history and missiology in the Orthodox Patriarchal Seminary in Nairobi from 1982, teaches parts of these added aspects in his courses from the year 2004, a thing he could not do previously, considering the ecclesial divide in Kenya then. In his addresses during the annual memorial services of Bishop George at his tomb in Thogoto, Metropolitan Makarios has continuously pointed out the erroneous action of the Africans who misled the local Metropolitan who proposed the defrocking of Bishop George, whom he personally knew from 1977 and considered a humble, visionary, great, monumental leader and father of the Orthodox Church not only in Kenya but also in Africa. In his address on 21st July 2019 at the memorial service of Bishop George at the tomb of this hierarch at Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene in Thogoto, Metropolitan Makarios called Bishop George "the

uncanonized saint of our time.” The reality is, much has changed since the unity of the AOCK, with most of the personalities who said or would have said something negative about Bishop George now saying only the positive, which is a complete turn of events.

The problem with the existing studies mentioning Bishop George is that they focus on his negative contribution, while the current contextual inclinations focus on his positive contribution. With the passing of the generation that knew Bishop George personally, and because of the fact that the Bishop George’s divide of the 1979 schism did not write about him, there is an urgency to document his life, especially for the positive parts which are clearly missing. Documenting his life will give those Kenyans and non-Kenyans who only knew of his negative side a chance to learn of the other side. The AOCK, which Bishop George initiated, having turned out to be the largest Orthodox Church of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa to this day, will need to stipulate who such a figure is to them. Thus, this study seeks to present a comprehensive past and current understanding and interpretation of the life of Bishop George by the Orthodox faithful in Kenya, highlighting both the positive contribution and the negative aspects of his life as well as his contribution to Orthodox missiology. Using these, the study will then ask what kind of a person Bishop George was, and whether he is worthy of an ecclesial recognition or not. While this study seeks to unveil the unwritten parts of the life and contribution of Bishop George, and thus focus on most of what was not covered in previous studies, this study does not overlook or underestimate the work and contributions of previous scholars.

Study focus

The fundamental question this study seeks to answer is, could Bishop George be given some form of ecclesial recognition or even considered for local or universal glorification (canonization) in the Orthodox Church or not? If he deserves such recognition, what form would such follow? Would it follow the already existing categories of saints or would his case necessitate a new category for him and his contemporaries, like the Patriarchate of Moscow in year 2000 created a new category for their last Tsar and his family calling them the Holy Passion-Bearers? Is the role of Bishop George in the formation and development of the Orthodox Church in Kenya reason enough to have him formally recognized? What role will his controversial life play in this recognition? What does the interplay of the past and the current understanding of the AOCK adherents and their attestation of Bishop George as a local spiritual hero and leader in one end, and a dividing element in the other, mean for such recognition?

The sources used in this study feature journals, books, and dissertations that have focused on the African Orthodox Church of Kenya, oral history interviews from people who knew the late Bishop George, and the biography of Bishop George as printed in his burial program. Because ecclesial recognition is informed by the biography and the historical contribution of an individual, this study will seek to present the life history of Bishop George from birth and his later contributions to the formation of the AOCK and Orthodox Mission in Kenya.

Ecclesial recognition and glorification of saints in the Orthodox Church

The church has a responsibility of producing saints out of her adherents. The act of recognizing one as a saint in the Orthodox Church is termed as glorification, rather than the more widely used Roman Catholic term of canonization. This act only confirms the attainment of an identifiable level of sainthood from the local church's perspective. It is decided upon with different methods, depending on the local church and the type of the saint involved. The Orthodox Church has no specific consensus on how a saint is confirmed as glorified; rather, each saint is taken on a case-by-case basis, although some local churches have even formulated a methodology of how to conduct it. The one thing that is common in all forms of glorification is that the story of the person who is proposed for glorification is always identified. One major source of church history, highly recognized by Orthodox missiology, are the individuals who planted and evangelized or helped spiritually develop, protect or rejuvenate the faith of a region. Thus, in order to understand the formation, development, and mission of a church, it is important to understand who was involved in the laying of its foundation. The Orthodox Church has a practice of glorifying (canonizing) such persons that have made notable contributions to local churches. Such have included persons who instituted or were instrumental in the formation and development of the church in new areas. In order to ascertain such persons and their contributions, a thorough study is done on their life, spirituality, as well as contribution, before they are declared saints of a certain category. Examples are found both in scripture, the early church tradition and the contemporary church.

In our contemporary times, we have Saints Herman and Innocent of Alaska who are considered the Patron and Apostle to America respectively, for their contribution in the formation of Eastern Christianity from Russia to Alaska in the 18th century, and since then Orthodoxy spread to the Americas. Saint Nicholas is considered the enlightener of Japan for his contribution in the

planting and spreading of Orthodoxy in the Far East through Japan in the nineteenth century, thus given the title, Equal to the Apostle.

Thus, the question arises why the Orthodox pioneers in East Africa, Bishop Christophoros Spartas of Uganda, Fr Obadiah Basajjitalo of Uganda, Bishop George Gathuna of Kenya and Archimandrite Nicodemos Sarikas who served in Tanzania have not been glorified (canonized) as the Apostles/Enlighteners of East Africa? Maybe this could not have been possible with Bishop George having been defrocked, but since his defrockation was lifted, the Church of East Africa should have seen some form of consideration on this issue. There have been some indications that the Greek priest Archimandrite Nicodemos Sarikas could be glorified (canonized), but no one has spoken of the three Africans. This study will seek to show the contribution of one of them, mentioning the others only in the course of the formation and development of the Orthodox faith in East Africa. At the end, this study will discuss why the Orthodox Church in the five East African states is the largest and fastest growing in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, with Kenya taking the lead. From this foundation, the question will be raised if ecclesial recognition will be appropriate and deserved in the case of Bishop George and his East African contemporaries.

Christianity in Kenya

Christianity came to the coast of Kenya through European Christians in the late 15th century. The first to arrive were Roman Catholic missionaries, including the group with Vasco da Gama who came to Mombasa in 1498 and that of Francis Xavier who passed through Malindi heading to India in 1542. The other team of missionaries came through the British-based Church Missionary Society who sent Johann Ludwig Krapf in 1844 and Johann Rebmann in 1847. These European missionaries went mainly along the coast of Kenya and would come to mainland Kenya only between 1897–1901, during and after the construction of the railway line that arrived in Nairobi in 1899 and headed for Uganda which the Europeans had picked as the capital of the East African region. The central region of Kenya, where the Orthodox Church was initiated, received Christianity between 1897 and 1910.

The first missionaries who had contact with the Agikuyus, the main tribe of this region, were established within Kikuyu town. These missionaries were in the beginning very conscious of the Agikuyu people and their culture, but by the 1920s they had come to demonize the African culture and way of life, while the colonial government took the fertile Agikuyu highlands. The colonial

ideologies borrowing from the theories of social evolution, which only accepted one supreme culture and civilization – the European culture in this case– while belittling all the rest and insisting that others must conform to the supreme one, mainly led the initiatives of these missionaries and their British colonial government counterparts.

It is within this situation that some Agikuyus initiated a liberation movement that would liberate them from the biased form of British Christianity, schooling system and government. They thus began to form their own churches, schools and national government. They joined Orthodoxy through the African Orthodox Church founded in America in the 1920s through the movement of the blacks led by Marcus Garvey, through which Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa came to Kenya, taught and ordained some Kenyans. This form of Christianity would later become the AOOCK, with their independent and Karing'a schools, while their governmental formation initiatives led to the Mau Mau liberation movement that culminated with the independency of Kenya in 1963. This Kenyan-based tradition would later join the Greek Orthodox tradition through the efforts of Bishop George and his contemporaries.

Historical methodology

This study of the life of Bishop George will include the local voice; contexts, society, and heroes, for these have been missing in the past methods of writing church histories. At the same time, the goal is for it to be holistically ecumenical, not leaving out the non-Africans and the non-religious encounters. The method of this study, being a historical one, will seek for information from existing literature, which gives very little, but also oral history from personalities who knew the bishop. The most important text in this study is Bishop George's burial program and the autobiography printed behind it. This study will first seek to get his life history from birth and later his connection to the church and the legacy he left the AOOCK and the Orthodox Mission. From the results of this, the answer to the ecclesial recognition shall be addressed.

Biography of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna

Early years, education and family life

Bishop George was born Arthur Gatungu Gathuna in the year 1905 in Kenya, in the village of Gathūngu, Ndwaru Road in Riruta, Nairobi West. His parents were Gathuna Muthiora and Wanja Kinuthia, while his siblings were four brothers

and one sister. As a young boy and into his teenage years he mainly cared for his father's flock. He entered Ruthimitu Primary School in 1918 for his lower primary education, before entering middle school at Mambeere in Thogoto, Kikuyu before 1922. He was circumcised later that year with the *riika ria ciringi* (agemates of the one shilling group). Arthur would then attend Alliance High School from 1928–1930. He did exceptionally well. He was thus sponsored by the Thogoto Scotland Missionaries to join Chogoria Teachers College in Meru for a year. He taught in Chogoria area under the Scotland Missions after his graduation and then at Mang'ara school in Limuru from 1931. He later joined the Ruthimitu Karing'a School as from 1932, a school formed after the breakaway of the Africans from the British missionary churches and schools in 1929.

While at Ruthimitu Karing'a School, Arthur was sent by the Karing'a church to Kandara, Muranga in 1936. His task was to officially translate for Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa of the African Orthodox Church in South Africa, at the Orthodox Seminary in Gituamba village where the first Kenyan cohort of that school and the Orthodox faith were taught for eighteen months. Arthur would later turn out to not only be a brilliant translator but also an excellent learner to an extent that Archbishop Alexander received him as one of the students. Thus, Arthur graduated on 27th June 1937, with the rest of this first cohort, which he was also translating for. He would later receive an honorary degree to complement all his achievements in the Orthodox faith in December 1985 at Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California USA.

Arthur married Frasier Wambui, the daughter of Karanja Muthoka of Ruthimitu, Dagoretti South, in 1944. Although the custom then was to have many children, the couple had only two children, Stephen Mbugua (1945–2014) and Oliviah Wanja (1948–1964). This could be attributed to the national liberation processes, which Reverend Arthur Gathuna was central in, which forced such leaders to be mainly separated from their families and stay in hiding. Presbytera Frasier Gatungu departed from this life in 1965, and soon after, their daughter Oliviah passed on. Reverend Arthur could not marry again due to the canonical implication of the Greek Orthodox priesthood that once ordained, one cannot contract any lawful marriage. Bishop George's daughter-in-law, Jane Wanjuhi Mbugua, and her two adopted children Arthur Gatungu and Frasier Wambui, are the only surviving members of this family who live in the bishop's homestead in Kwa Ng'ang'a, Ndwaru Road in Riruta, Nairobi West.

Politics, priesthood, and ministry

On 1st June 1953, the British colonial government in Kenya arrested Reverend Arthur, together with other Mau Mau liberation fighters, including the famous Kapenguria six arrested on 21st October 1952. Reverend Arthur possibly remains the only Kenyan cleric arrested due to his senior position in the Mau Mau liberation movement. His arrest was because he was the cleric of the liberation church and the head teacher of the school system that produced most of the liberation soldiers and adherents. Reverend Arthur was imprisoned in Senya in Kajiando, then later transferred to Lamu where he stayed until 1958, and finally in Hola where he served his time until his release in 1961, having served a total imprisonment of eight years.

After independence, Fr Arthur was nominated by the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party as a Councilor of the Nairobi City Council government for the years 1963–1970, and later vied for the larger Dagoretti Ward position succeeding Ms Margaret Wambui Kenyatta, who left the position to take over as the City mayor. Reverend Arthur served the Council in different positions including serving as the Nairobi Councilor attending the Kiambu Municipal Council and as a Chairman of different Council committees until his departure from politics in 1979.

Reverend Arthur was ordained a priest in 1937 in Waithaka, Nairobi County, by Archbishop Daniel William Alexander and started his ministry in his home area in Nairobi-Kiambu Counties as a lone priest of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya. He was elevated to the status of Patriarchal Vicar for the church of Kenya in 1946 by Patriarch Christophoros II Danilidis, after the East African congregations were received under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. He was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite during the reign of his former Archbishop, Patriarch Nicholas VI Varelopoulos, and soon after consecrated as the Bishop of Nitria on 25th February 1973 at Saint Paul Kagira, Nairobi West. Metropolitan Frumentios Nassios of Irinoupolis (in office 1973–1982), assisted by two newly consecrated assistant bishops, Christophoros Spartas Sebbanja Mukasa (1899–1982) and Theodoros Nakyama (1924–1997) both from Uganda, led this service. It is during this service that Reverend Arthur was given a new first name of Saint George the Great, to henceforth be Bishop George. As a hierarch, Bishop George became the first in many ways. He was the first Kenyan to become an Orthodox Bishop under the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa; the first bishop in Africa to be consecrated outside the Patriarchal headquarters in Egypt; the first Assistant Bishop of the church of Kenya; and the first Kenyan widowed priest to become a bishop.

Defroccation and schism

Bishop George's consecration to the episcopacy had some opposition from four of the younger priests, Peter Michara, Gerasimos Gachumi, Eleftherios Ndwaru and Dimitrios Kinyanjui. According to Rev. John Ngethe, who was Bishop George's deacon and secretary for long, these priests thought of him as an old man who was too stringent and who abused the young ones excessively. After his consecration, this did not diminish but was rather reinforced. According to Rev. John Ngethe and Rev. Peter Michara, the defrocking was connected to the 1974 national elections in Kenya.

There were two candidates for the local seat of Member of Parliament within Dagoretti, an Orthodox Christian Dr Johnstone Muthiora, a first cousin to Fr Councilor John Ngethe, and a non-Orthodox who was the seating MP, Dr Njoroge Mungai. Dr Njoroge Mungai, a freedom fighter, was highly friendly to the Orthodox, and was a first cousin and personal doctor to President Jomo Kenyatta. Because the Orthodox Christians constituted the majority of voters within the Dagoretti constituency, whoever they accepted was almost an automatic winner. Dr Muthiora was very popular with his fellow Orthodox clergy and laity, and especially Bishop George and thus seemed like an automatic winner. In the process, President Kenyatta intervened and requested his friend, Bishop George, to support his relative Dr Njoroge Mungai, and thus Bishop George started campaigning for Dr Njoroge Mungai, winning to his side only one clergyman Rev. Eleftherios Ndwaru and a few lay people. All other clergy and lay people were strongly behind the former favorite candidate Dr Muthiora. As a leader of all these clergy and lay people, Bishop George was highly embarrassed and took offense. The local councilor Rev. John Ngethe, the then Attorney General Charles Njonjo, and the Vice President Daniel Moi, supported Dr Muthiora vehemently.

This contest was also about who would become the next President of Kenya, after the sickly and aged Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The seating MP of Dagoretti, Dr Njoroge Mungai, was pushing to be the next president, while the current Vice President Daniel Moi, with the help of the Attorney General, Charles Njonjo, was seeking the same position. Thus, the attorney general and the vice president funded Dr Muthiora to shake down the popularity of Dr Njoroge Mungai locally, which would make him lose his ministerial position and national popularity. Dr Muthiora won and Bishop George's candidate thus lost, to his great disappointment. Dr Muthiora died a year after in a very suspect way similar to another MP, JM Kariuki, who had died a week earlier. This did not

help matters, for the supporters of Dr Muthiora felt cheated by those of Dr Njoroge Mungai who would later reclaim the seat.

The clergy who supported Dr Muthiora, among them being those who had opposed Bishop George's consecration, realized they could use this political hostility to overturn things against Bishop George. Our two informants, Reverends Peter Michara and John Ngethe, together with nine others, Dimitrios Kinyanjui, Ioanikios Gachau, Peter Wangige, Eleftherios Wainaina, Chrysostomos Kagwima, Paul Nyore, Paul Kagucia, Ephantus Kamiaraho, and Gerasimos Gachumi, wrote a letter to Patriarch Nicholas VI through Metropolitan Frumentios in 1978. In the letter they highlighted how Bishop George was wrongly consecrated and a terrible bishop who did not obey the local Metropolitan and who did Protestant services within the Orthodox Church. The local Metropolitan, Frumentios Nassios (d. 1982), who had consecrated and let Bishop George operate freely, is said to have tried to stop them, knowing most of these were false accusations, but they could not listen. The clergy rather urged him with other lay leaders and clergymen to take it to the level of defrocking Bishop George.

According to Rev. Michara and Rev. Ngethe, Patriarch Nicholas and Metropolitan Frumentios arranged for a meeting with all these clergy and Bishop George in Nairobi, but Bishop George did not show up, giving the same clergy more time to smear his name. Considering the Patriarchate would not accept the idea of independency and autonomy, which Bishop George kept pushing for, and the fact that Bishop George did not fully understand his place as an assistant bishop, for he did a lot of things without consulting the Metropolitan, not forgetting his refusal to meet the Patriarch, Metropolitan Frumentios easily agreed to go with the supposed accusations. The Metropolitan revealed to the involved clergy and laity, as attested by Rev. Michara and Rev. Ngethe, how he would make Bishop George agree to go to Alexandria for the synodal meeting by lying to him that he would be elevated to the status of Metropolitan and henceforth would be independent of any Greek bishop. Bishop George fell for it.

Thus due to these contextual and theological issues that created a rift between Bishop George, the Kenyan clergy and essentially the Alexandrian hierarchy, this Kenyan bishop was defrocked on 30th November 1979. This was after the Holy Synod led by Pope and Patriarch Nicholas VI Varelopoulos together with thirteen Metropolitans sat in Egypt and resolved the same, with only two of the youngest hierarchs, Ireneos of Accra and Petros of Aksum, dissenting. In his response letter on this subject Bishop George took the verdict as a biased preconceived verdict, where he was wrongly accused in Greek, a language he could not understand or respond in, by a synod full of Greek

hierarchs who did not understand the contextual mission matters of which he was accused.

According to Rev. Michara and Rev. Ngethe, Bishop George had not done all the things they wrote in the letter, but they had three authentic reasons that pushed them to write against him. First, Bishop George abused them openly in front of the congregants and even their families, which brought much shame to them. Although such language was common among the aged in society like Bishop George, they were not comfortable hearing that within the church context and especially in front of their wives and children. Secondly, Bishop George repeatedly told the lay people that these clergy were too hungry for money, another aspect these clergy were not happy with, seeking to know where this hierarch wanted them to get their salaries from, while they were not as rich as he was. A third reason, which pushed this clergy to the edge, was the common trend of Bishop George working very closely with the elderly lay people to run the church, without much involvement of these clergy. When Bishop George, who was extremely busy, was not available, such council of elders led the church business without consulting these younger clergy. For them this cultural trend was diminishing their strength as clergy in the parishes.

These clergy, according to Rev. Ngethe and Rev. Michara, would only later realize the implications of falsely accusing Bishop George, and ask for forgiveness from Bishop George who gladly gave it to them in 1985. He asked them to end the existing conflict and protect the AOOCK lands and resources from the Greeks, for to him, the battle for autonomy was to never finished until the Kenyans would get it.

Most of the Kenyan faithful could not understand why Bishop George, their founding father and shepherd, was defrocked. They actually considered him a “victim of white colonialists.” As Rev. Michara explains, it was the use of the same words used during the colonial times, *Muthungu* (white man, here referring to the Greek hierarchs) and *Mundu Muiru* (black man, here referring to Bishop George), that fueled the schism and subsequent conflicts in Kenya. Considering the Orthodox Christians were in the national Mau Mau liberation movement where the same terms were used, such was the beginning of a battle cry and thus an internal conflict ensued.

After his defrocking, some Kenyans, whom Bishop George had sent to study and were now living in Greece, helped him rebel further and later join one Old Calendar schismatic group from Greece known as the Holy Synod in Resistance. There he was to be given the title of Metropolitan, which he had been falsely promised by Metropolitan Frumentios. In fact, when Bishop George returned to Kenya as promised, he told the Kenyans that he got the title of

Metropolitan, although he was still waiting for his application to be reviewed by the Old Calendarists. This new synod elevated him to the rank of Metropolitan on 8th August 1984 at Saint Irene New York, USA, and he has since held the title Archbishop of Kenya, holding this title as the first one in history. In the beginning, only a few priests and parishes who were involved in the defrocking were not with Archbishop George, but after Archbishop Anastasios's many efforts to reunite the Kenyan church, the Western Kenya clergy, as well as those of Nyeri and Laikipia returned to the Alexandrian side. Although Archbishop George's side was mainly holding churches within the central region of Kenya, he had the most churches and members, compared to that of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, even with his side being considered officially schismatic and uncanonical.

The original idea of bringing Archbishop Daniel William Alexander to Kenya was to have him ordain a few Kenyans who would then henceforth continue with the local church unaided. Thus, when the Kenyans joined the Greek tradition, the same mentality was always on focus, that one day when some of them became bishops they would be left to run their church, independently from the Greeks. Bishop George, who had not studied much Eastern Orthodox theology, did not understand or probably never cared about the ecclesiology of what a local church meant and what this meant for a diocese and a diocesan bishop. He and Bishop Christophoros Spartas continued with their demand for independency and autonomy, especially after their episcopal elections in 1972 and consecrations in 1973. In fact, it was Bishop Anastasios Yannulatos, who had been sent to East Africa to help heal the schism, and the death of Bishop Christoforos that made the independency agenda not develop much in Uganda.

Assessing this situation as the acting Archbishop of Kenya (1981–1991), Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos explains that the fact that Metropolitan Frumentios was too reluctant to serve the Africans had given Bishop George excessive power in leadership. This had led the locals to believe that Bishop George was the hierarch of the blacks and Metropolitans Frumentios of the three hundred whites (200 Greeks from Greece and Cyprus, and 100 Lebanese) in Kenya. This thickened the plot of independency and autonomy, which Bishop George always wanted since the formation of the AOCK.

This was further reinforced by the existence of two church registrations, the African Orthodox Church of Kenya first registered in 1933 and subsequently in 1965 after independence, which was led by Bishop George, and the Holy Archbishopric of Irinoupolis (reg. 1968) led by the sitting Metropolitan. Bishop George used this situation to declare constantly that the AOCK had no relations with the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and that it was always independent since 1933 when it was first registered. Furthermore, the Patriarchate of Alexandria,

according to Archbishop Anastasios hastily defrocked Bishop George, without first investigating, what he later came to note as defrocking provoked by some clergy who did not like Bishop George, besides the incompetency of the then Metropolitan Frumentios to understand his own clergy. Archbishop Anastasios tried his best to bring back Bishop George to the jurisdiction of Alexandria, but the fact that he had the title Archbishop, had a large flock that followed him, kept ordaining and celebrating as a hierarch, and his goal of wanting autonomy, made it impossible. On this matter, Archbishop Anastasios gives the best way forward to such challenges, including teaching Orthodox theology seriously in mission lands, producing contextualized constitutions for Orthodox churches in the mission, ordaining local clergy and hierarchs as soon as they are ready, and studying the contexts of the mission. If all these had been done, he believes, there would never have been a schism in Kenya.

Demise and lifting

After having been diagnosed with diabetes for some years, Bishop George became very weak in his old age, but never stopped ministering to his spiritual children. On his deathbed, he forgave and embraced the clergymen who had falsely accused him, as confirmed by Rev. Ngethe and Rev. Michara. He emphasized to all Kenyans that he would always have one eye open, even in his grave, to look and punish whoever tries to destroy the church he so diligently worked for. Bishop George departed from this life on 27th July 1987 at 5:30 pm at the age of 82 years. True to his words, not even the morticians could close his right eye, which was fully open during the burial. Bishop George was buried at the parish of Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene in Thogoto-Kiambu, Central Kenya, where he had proposed to be buried before his demise. The service was led by his successor Metropolitan Niphon Kiggundu, assisted by the president of his new synod; the Holy Synod in Resistance, Metropolitan Cyprian Kutsumbas of Oropos & Fili in Greece, who was accompanied by the England-born Archimandrite Fr Ambrosios Adrian Baird (later the Bishop of Methone from 1993). Bishop George's tomb remains a historic monument for the Orthodox Christians in Kenya, visited by the Orthodox at will, and especially on his annual memorial on 27th July.

On 1st November 2006, the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa under the presidency of Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II Choreftakis and 17 Metropolitans, including Petros of Aksum who dissented in the defrocking synod in 1979, resolved to posthumously lift the twenty-seven year old defrocking of Bishop George, after a proposal by

Metropolitan Makarios Tillyrides of Kenya. Thus, an official Tomos no. 1524 was issued to mark this historic occurrence. In fact, this act of good faith brought many of the schismatic clergy and laity of Kenya back under the See of Saint Mark, which they had left after the defrocking of Bishop George.

Ministry legacy

Bishop George Gathuna is considered the father of Orthodoxy in Kenya not only for having become the first indigenous Kenyan Orthodox priest (1935) and hierarch (1972), but also for being the first in some many areas as well as spearheading many substantial activities of the church that are visible to the present. Most importantly, he is considered a father due to his ministry in almost every corner of the country and leading the Kenyans into the first Orthodox community and the Greek tradition. This ministry included, converting and baptizing most of the first Orthodox faithful of Kenya, initiating most of the first Kenyan parishes, as well as getting lands from the relevant government bodies for the church. Even more memorable, Bishop George mentored the first priests in Kenya, and led them to expand the Kenyan church to considerable extents. He also contextualized many activities to fit the locals, contributed highly in theological education, initiated women and translation ministries as well as resource mobilization strategies.

Evangelization and converting others

One exceptional ministry of Bishop George was that of converting and baptizing most of the first Orthodox faithful of Kenya, initiating most of the first Kenyan parishes, as well as getting lands from the relevant government bodies for the church. We have two forms of evangelization in the AOCK as early as the formative days of the Orthodox faith in Kenya. Some people having heard of Orthodoxy and some having experienced it in Kiambu and Nairobi invited Bishop George (then Fr Arthur) to bring them the Orthodox tradition. A good example of this are the Luhyas of Western Kenya, among them the Bunyore, Maragori and Ebuyangu residents who invited him in 1942 and 1946, and Bishop George henceforth came often to spread the gospel in all Luhya towns. When the Mau Mau national liberation challenges could not allow him as a liberation movement leader, he invited Fr Obadiah Basajjakitaloh of Uganda to continue with the evangelization from the Ugandan side, a process that eventually brought the Luos and Nandis into Orthodoxy.

As a priest, Bishop George is said to have spread Orthodoxy alone in most parts of Kenya. In his conversion ministry, Bishop George is noted to have converted many through his door-to-door evangelization, where he picked one of the respectable and prominent families of a village. He would teach them what Orthodox Christianity was all about and explained what was acceptable from their African way of life and what was not. The catechism class went continuously until he would win this family, then using their place invite the rest of the village to join Orthodoxy. It was such evangelistic methods that made him convert five members from the famous Kenyan tycoon, Njenga Karume's family in 1942, having visited them since 1939. This is how the Orthodox Church was established in most areas that formerly had no Orthodox Christians in those early years.

Contextualization

Contextualization is at the core of the formation of the Orthodox Church in Kenya. This was essential because the AOCK was formed by individuals who wanted the liberation of the Africans from a European Christianity that demonized the African culture, thus restricting all Africans from involving themselves with the African cultural ways. Bishop George became a strong proponent of inculturation, teaching the Africans how to distinguish and avoid pagan and syncretistic tendencies, by worshiping in the Orthodox way, while all other ways of their life remained African. This is the very fundamental reason Orthodoxy in Kenya grew and was embraced in the early days.

A good example is how Bishop George brought in the African-Gikuyu way of leadership and management into the Orthodox administration. He created councils of elders similar to the traditional Gikuyu ones, but instead of just having old men in it he also brought some old women and a few middle-aged men. Everyone in such councils needed to have reached the traditional level and age of leadership as well as personally gone through the traditional ritual that qualified one to be in the council of leadership in the traditional sense. In this way, the locals would see whatever was discussed and decided on in such forums as legitimately binding and worthy of following within and outside the church context. It is such which was replicated in the parish councils around the country. Such a hybrid of Christian and African leadership models liberated each other in a way; the traditional leadership from gender imbalance, and the Christian leadership getting seasoned leaders that brought in younger members who would take over from them in future after their on-the-job training.

Nevertheless, these leadership aspects were part of the issues genuinely raised by the clergy who were for Bishop George's defrocking. They accused their bishop of excessively using the cultural ways, for it lowered the power of the clergy in church administration, giving the older lay people excessive power in the community and in the church as well.

Joining the Greek Orthodox tradition

It was Bishop George and Bishop Christophoros Reuben Mukasa Sebanja Spartas of Uganda, who through Archimandrite Fr Nicodemos Sarikas, helped the East Africans join the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, a process that started in the late 1930s and culminated in 1946 with their official reception. This was because after a little digging, Fr Arthur and Fr Spartas did not trust the apostolic succession and religious authenticity of the American-based African Orthodox Church, which they were at first part of. Thus they sought to join a church with authentic apostolic roots.

This move led to some of the adherent of the first grouping of the African Orthodox Church in Kenya led by all other Kenyan clergymen ordained by Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa, except Bishop George, to split on 27th June 1937, for not wanting to join the Greek Orthodox Church. The ones who refused to join Orthodoxy were mainly from Eastern Kiambu, Muranga and Nyeri Counties, and they thus formed new churches; the Independent African Orthodox Church, and the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA); the precursors of the Akorino Church and the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Kenya (AIPCK). The Orthodox Church has minimal presence in the noted three regions in due to this decision. If not for Bishop George, there would not have been this initial chance for Kenyans to join the canonical Greek Orthodox Church under the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Theological education

Before his ordination, Bishop George helped educate the very first Kenyan Orthodox clergy while under his tutor Archbishop Daniel William Alexander from early 1936 to late 1937 in Gituamba, Muranga County, right before they were transferred to Waithaka in Nairobi County where they finished their coursework. This first-generation seminary had offered a mixed Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian theology. The first cohort of this school produced two priests, Rev. Arthur and Rev. Philip Kiande of Nyeri County, as

well as eight deacons from Muranga County. Except for Rev. Arthur, all the other students formed the breakaway church as noted above.

Bishop George, having separated with his colleagues from Muranga County who owned the Gituamba Seminary, initiated the second-generation seminary; Saint Paul's senior seminary, in Waithaka-Dagoretti (Gwa Kabuu), where he would train his leadership team and future clergy, now that he was alone. This school was erected exactly where Dagoretti High School is at present. He would also initiate the Saint Paul's Orthodox Junior Seminary at Waithaka, Nairobi West in 1965, where locals were taught Eastern Orthodox theology in a high school joint syllabus similar to the ecclesiastical high schools in Greece. Due to his many responsibilities, Bishop George mainly did the administration work of the seminary, including sourcing for teachers, locally and internationally. He thus left the teaching to his other colleagues including two Ugandan clergymen; Rev. Obadiah Bassajakitaro and Rev. Emmanuel Mulunga, who taught theology together with some visiting lecturers from Greece and Reader Anesti Anderi from Western Kenya. The later Metropolitan Niphon Niccassios Kiggundu Magu, and the later Rev. Moses Ngugi taught humanities and language courses, while some other Kenyan and Tanzanian teachers taught the science courses. Some graduates of the prior senior seminary, Rev. Peter Wangige and Rev. John Ngethe, taught teleurgics and served as the Chaplains and Rectors of the junior seminary. Bishop George also raised the needed financial resources and the needed items locally from the parishes, until Rev. Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos, a citizen of Greece, came to help raise most of the finances that helped transform highly the living standards of this seminary and that of the seminarians. Rev. Chrysostom would later leave after he was unable to work with the local Metropolitan, Archbishop Frumentios Nassios. These Saint Paul's earlier senior and later junior seminaries in Waithaka (Gwa Kabuu) in Nairobi County served the church from 1964 until 1982. It took three years to graduate from the senior seminary, which received high school graduates, and four years for the junior seminary students who did a hybrid of high school and Orthodox theological education.

This second-generation Seminary would come to a halt after His Beatitude Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus, who also doubled as the President of Cyprus, visited Waithaka in 1970. His Beatitude offered to help Rev. Arthur build a new upgraded seminary, to replace the existing mud-walled and thatched-roof one. To His Beatitude, the structures of the Waithaka Seminary were similar to a chicken house in Cyprus, and thus he felt the need to offer a construction fit to educate Africans that wanted to serve as future theologians and clergymen of the Orthodox faith. Archbishop Makarios reiterated the same sentiments in July 1970 when Pope & Patriarch Nicholas VI Varelopoulos of Alexandria paid him

a visit in Cyprus, adding that he would also offer human resource and finances to the new seminary. Archbishop Makarios promised this would be possible, if only some suitable place to build the same would be found. Bishop George, who also worked in the Nairobi City Council Assembly, together with the local Member of Parliament Dr Njoroge Mungai who also served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, plus the then Mayor of Nairobi, Margaret Wambui Kenyatta (daughter to President Kenyatta), found some community land in Riruta, a village close to Waithaka. The land was owned by the family of the Paramount Chief Kinyanjui Gathirimu who wanted a community project set on the same premise, which the Orthodox Church promised to add to the seminary. Once the land was processed and fully owned by the Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus fulfilled his promise and built a new magnificent third-generation seminary, later named after the financial donor Archbishop Makarios III, as well as a technical institute named after the land donor Paramount Chief Kinyanjui.

This third-generation Orthodox Seminary and its adjacent Technical Institute had the foundation stone blessed and laid on 22nd March 1971 by H.B. Archbishop Makarios, who also visited the ongoing work in September 1972 and in August 1974 when he spoke to the new Archbishop of East Africa, Metropolitan Frumentios Nassios, about opening the two schools in January 1975. Although the construction was fully finished by June 1974 and entirely furnished by mid-1977, in preparation for the official opening, this did not happen due to the 20 July–18 August 1974 Turkish occupation of Cyprus, and the later death of H.B. Archbishop Makarios in August 1977 in Cyprus.

The two schools opened their doors officially in 1982 under H.G. Bishop Professor Anastasios Yannoulatos of Greece, who was the acting Archbishop of East Africa (1981–1991). At first the two schools served only the Orthodox Christians in Kenya, but later opened their doors to other East African Orthodox students for theology, and the rest of the world for the technical school. The financial donor also sent one Dr Andreas Tillyrides from Limassol in Cyprus, who he had sponsored to take graduate studies in France, Oxford and Belgium, to come assist in higher theological studies in the newly formed seminary. Bishop George helped bring in the needed first students of the seminary. This Dr Andreas Tillyrides would later be consecrated on 25th July 1992 as Bishop Makarios of Riruta, to serve as an assistant bishop of Kenya and is currently the Metropolitan of Nairobi. According to his statements, the later Metropolitan Makarios Tillyrides who visited Bishop George every Thursday, highly relied on this African hierarch on understanding the Orthodox mission in Africa as well as getting seminarians annually.

Starting from 1995, under Pope and Patriarch Petros VII Papapetrou, through the influence of the then General Dean, Bishop Dr Makarios Tillyrides of Riruta, this Seminary became the main theological school for the entire Greek Orthodox Church in Africa, a status it has kept till today. The Orthodox Patriarchal Ecclesiastical School—Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus Seminary as it is now known, has had students from all corners of Africa, including some students of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who attended this seminary at its initial stage.

This only goes to show how instrumental Bishop George has been on matters of theological education in Kenya as well as the entire continent of Africa. For through the foundational work of Bishop George, the current theological school for the Greek Orthodox Church in Africa exists. A simple seed planted by Bishop George to start a seminary for fellow Kenyans who would help him minister in the vast lands of Kenya, would, through the assistance of Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus, become the light of Orthodoxy for the entire continent. This endeavor may even be broadened further when the current initiatives of the Orthodox Church of Finland through its mission arm, Filantropia, succeeds in assisting this third-generation seminary to enter their fourth-generation status and offer accredited degrees.

Translations

The first translations of liturgical and theological books for the Orthodox Christians in Kenya were done using English liturgical and theological books from American books bought in 1935 through Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa. Bishop George as a translator of Archbishop Alexander at the time was also the chief translator of books for Kenyans. The translations came from English texts bought from the American Orthodox churches; mainly Greek and Antiochian, and later from the Greek Archdiocese of Thyatira and Great Britain given by the Patriarchate of Alexandria in the 1940s.

The first foreign missionaries serving at the Saint Paul's Seminary in Waithaka helped translate some of the liturgical services from Greek books, through reading and dictating the same to the seminary students in English. Such missionaries included Rev. Nicodemos Sarikas of Asia Minor in the 1930s, as well as Rev. Obadiah Bassajakitalo of Uganda and Rev. Chrysostomos Papsarantopoulos of Greece in the 1960–1970s.

The Kenyans would also later print a few liturgical services, catechism, and extra-liturgical songs books, with the earliest in the early 1970s. These were mainly done by Peter Kahuho Muchai (b. 1932), a parishioner of Saint Paul in

Waithaka, who worked for the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Nairobi as a printer. His first printings were basically done illegally at his place of work. As he explained, Kahuhu used to go early to work, print the service books, and take the printed papers back home for arrangement and binding. He would sell them at a cheap price, for money enough to only buy more printing papers and binding materials, and not for any profit. Some of the most famous of these publications done by the locals include the general catechism book, the Orthros and the Divine Liturgy bound together, and the christening services, burial and matrimony services bound together. The other liturgical translations were initiated by Metropolitan Makarios Tillyrides after he went to Luhya land for a burial and found they only had English texts for the same, a reality he was not used to, having served in areas where the translations of the time of Bishop George were done. On return to Nairobi, he ordered that the seminarians make translations for their tribes and thus many translations into the local languages in Kenya and other African countries were produced by the seminarians.

Women in ministry

Bishop George's ministry used many women in church leadership as well as the liturgical life. While it was easy to have women in senior church management and leadership positions within the administration, what remained unique was the way he involved them in the liturgical life of the church. It is during the time of Bishop George, as a priest and later as hierarch, that women, married or widowed, who were mature and deeply knowledgeable in the Orthodox faith and the scriptures, were informally trained and given similar preacher's IDs like the ordained male clergy. The card had the respective woman minister's photo, names, their designated spiritual responsibilities and the authorizing entity signature (Bishop George's). Such women ministers would lead the services that did not need an ordained clergy; lead the prayer services, preach and even catechize non-Orthodox in the congregations where the priests were not available. Although the contemporary Orthodox Church worldwide does not have many chances for women in ministry, Kenya has always had women valued for this very reason, integrated in the system by Bishop George. When some women were widowed, Bishop George brought them even closer to ministry by "marrying them to Christ and the Church" as the locals called it. A normal wedding service was done, only that the groom was considered to be the invisible Christ, and from that day such a woman would be expected to serve at the altar, clean the sanctuary/altar area, clean the sacred vessels, covers and vestments, handle sacred items for the priest if need be, preach to the people if there was no

ordained clergy, among such sacred duties. All Bishop George's contemporaries and generations of clergy after them also followed this trend, which either the bishop or the priests were allowed to do in their parishes.

At the moment this trend of doing a "marriage" without a physical groom has been stopped. Rather, a dedication prayer, which is usually a slightly extended version of the prayer for making a reader, is said over the dedicated widowed women who want to serve the church in an extra way, after which the local bishop takes the woman in the altar place through one altar side door and out the other. Such women ministers get to do the same duties as earlier prescribed under Bishop George. These women almost live like nuns although they are not exact nuns, for they live in their homes and continue with their normal life. The only difference being that these women serve the church in the above described capacity, which they would not have otherwise been allowed to do, and are henceforth expected to live a more revered and morally upright life than before, in addition to the expectation to not be married in the future.

This trend of having women serve in the altar and as preachers is not entirely Bishop George's idea alone, but rather an extension of what Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa had taught him, only that with Archbishop Daniel, the women who served in such capacity were the wives of the ordained clergy. Bishop George took this and turned it into a ministry that allowed all faithful women, not just the clergy wives, regardless of whether they were married or widowed, to serve the church. During Bishop George's time, the local priests would also be allowed to dedicate any woman into this ministry. The current practice only allows the widowed old women into this ministry, only when permitted and dedicated by the local hierarch. Such women are currently not given any documents to prove this and their work entails only cleaning the altar and nothing further. Although the number of women serving in such a capacity in Kenya is reduced, it remains a Bishop George's legacy, for it is not found anywhere else in the Orthodox world.

Nevertheless, this is similar to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa 16th November 2016 so called revived deaconesses' ministry. Since this date seven women have received this so-called deaconess ministry in Africa; six women from the Democratic Republic of Congo were dedicated on 17th February 2017 and one Australian citizen serving in Sierra Leon on 11th November 2018. Although the Patriarchate of Alexandria agreed to revive the ancient ordination of women in ministry as deaconesses, the Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II Chreftakis seem to have conducted the sub-deacon service to the above-noted women, and they are actually taking the same role as the current Kenyan old widowed women ministers. The original deaconesses

service was conducted at the altar like that of a male deacon, and the deaconesses were to serve exactly like the male deacon, but none of this is so far been seen among the seven women. The women in Alexandria received in this office had their prayers conducted outside the altar, and none serve like a male deacon in the liturgical services.

In Kenya, the news of the deaconesses revival was received with much excitement, but not for long, especially after it was realized that the same principal of selection, responsibility and the service done to the so called deaconesses, was a reality similar to what is been in Kenya since the late 1930s under Bishop George. The revival of the deaconesses for the Orthodox in Africa appears to the Kenyans as a continuation of the legacy of Bishop George. Bishop George thus came long before his time, as his desire for active women ministers in the Greek Orthodox Church is now formally realized, even though not fully.

Resource mobilization

The Orthodox Church under Bishop George was economically self-sustaining in almost all aspects. All matters pertaining to resource mobilization was done from the local parish and through that the AOCK head office got assistance too. The AOCK used many resource mobilization mechanisms. Such included raising funds through charging for the liturgical services, internal fundraising or fundraising through the harambee method by inviting national and local leaders (Orthodox or not) to come to the church fundraising rallies, requesting for set contributions given by all or the financially abled persons, and asking for assistance from well-off families or individual parishioners, among others. The local monthly contributions expected for an AOCK adherent were mainly KES 5 in the 1960–1980s, and after the demise of Bishop George, the same trend seems to have continued considering that the parishioners gave KES 10 in the 1990s, and KES 100 from year 2000. Some of the contributions raised had a mechanism set through an annual circular to divide amongst the Archbishopric office, the parish, the hierarchs, the priests, the deacons, readers, and altar helpers. This meant that all institutions and the senior or lower order clergy, depending on the service they offered, would receive some form of remuneration. At the same time the priests and deacons were awarded a monthly salary by the parishes they served. Whatever resources came from abroad during the tenure of Bishop George only added to the existing local resources.

Currently, all funds circulating to pay the clergy, run the Archdiocese, and most of the AOCK institutions are funds coming from abroad. This has created a challenge since the European financial crisis in 2011 that highly affected

Greece and Cyprus, the main donors and partners contributing most of the finances used in Kenya.

Conclusion and discussion

While Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna could be termed as one of the most important Orthodox personalities in Kenya, he had his venerable side, but also stands out as a controversial figure in several ways. Amongst the controversial aspects outlined in this study, several other controversies have also been raised in the life of Bishop George as Welbourn has highlighted. The AIPCA group that split with the Orthodox in 1937, being purists, accused Bishop George of drinking and smoking, while Bishop Spartas accused him and the Kenyans of excessive mixing of religion and politics. He was also accused of accepting the African traditions taking excessive roots in the faith, bringing a form of syncretism. When he was given a chance to explain himself by Kamuyu wa Kangethe in an interview in January and February 1979, he denied all of these accusations, explaining that the context of his mission was what made some of these seem too much. Worst of all was his relationship with some of his clergy, which made them force his defrocking, and even worse was his decision to continue ministering and purporting to be a hierarch after this, creating a schism that has lasted to this very day.

From this study, it is also clear that Bishop George's foundational contribution to what the Orthodox Church is become in Kenya and beyond, is a rich legacy that has dictated much of what is done in the Kenya and by extension in some other African nations, through the seminarians of the Patriarchal seminary in Nairobi. Thus, he remains an important beam of the Orthodox faith and point of reference to this region even to this very moment. In memory of his spiritual, leadership, and general development of the church in Kenya, does Bishop George therefore deserve an ecclesial recognition that will go beyond history? While controversies have not stopped other personalities in the past from getting recognized by the church, can the ones of Bishop George be ignored to have him receive an ecclesial recognition? From what has been the defining factor for all ecclesial recognitions in the past, it seems that the Kenyans are the ones to determine what Bishop George is to them when it comes to ecclesial recognition. If favorable, they could do that through popular veneration or have their hierarchs investigate more and if satisfied, propose the kind of recognition they would prefer to the synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa for a final resolution. Whether this recognition will be among the already known church recognitions for church founders in different regions,

including Apostles or Enlighteners, or whether a new recognition will be needed, such a response can only be given by this holy synod.

On the other hand, it may be that the Kenyan church will not need to offer Bishop George any special ecclesial recognition, but rather take his historic contribution to their church as it stands. Furthermore, they could recognize the need to seek more information about him in history, making this study a beginning. If the historic legacy of Bishop George becomes the choice of Kenyans, it will be important to highlight that the Greek Orthodox hierarchs as well as the clergy and church leaders who served Kenya during Bishop George's lifetime and even after, have ignored or completely forgotten his place in the formation and development of the Orthodox faith in Kenya. More so, they have forgotten how instrumental his legacy is, not only in the formative stages of the Kenyan church, but also for the current and future existence of this church. Such will need to be reviewed and a deliberate attempt to make clear the history of the AOCC be taken seriously to avoid losing such personalities among other Orthodox figures who may have been overlooked along the way.

It is important to even ask at this point whether what this study has provided is enough to make any of the two hypothetical determinations that this paper has concluded with. A question that is best answered not only by the readers of this study, but more so the adherents of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya, as well as the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa who all of these directly involves. Whatever the decision, maybe a similar study and action should be done for Bishop Christoforos Reuben Sebbanja Ssedimba Mukasa Spartas and Rev. Obadiah Kabanda Basajjitalo both from Uganda, and Rev. Nicodemos Sarikas of Asia Minor, who were instrumental in the formation and development of the Orthodox faith in Uganda and Tanzania respectively, and East Africa as a whole.

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Unknown Pioneers and Unsung Heroes: Forgotten Christian Ancestors of the Gold Coast (Ghana)

By Maureen O. Iheanacho²

The Protestant missionary movement of the nineteenth century affected non-Western contexts in many ways.³ From the perspective of the missionary sending nations, easily the most significant factor in Christianity's spread was the arrival of Western Christian missionaries in the "dark heathen world" of the South, including Africa.⁴ In this chapter, however, I seek to show ways in which in the work of the Basel Mission Society (hereinafter Basel Mission), whose presence in the Gold Coast spanned close to a century, the role of indigenous agents contributed to the success of the mission.⁵

Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba, the two indigenous agents discussed in this chapter, worked tirelessly alongside the European missionaries of the Basel Mission. Their brief "biographies" and mission field reports serve to illustrate the significant role of indigenous agency in the Christianization of the Gold Coast. The story of their labors goes far toward correcting any assumption that evangelization of the indigenous population of the Gold Coast was the singular heritage of Western Christian missionaries and their mission organizations.

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³ See Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

⁴ For the impact of missionary organizations and agencies in West Africa, see Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835–1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966); Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967); Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); and Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Three principal mission organizations operating in West Africa were the Church Mission Society (CMS), the Basel Evangelical Mission Society often referred to as the Basel Mission Society (BMS) or simply Basel Mission, and the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS).

⁵ Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa*, 167.

Indispensability of Indigenous Agency

In the church of present-day Ghana, Western missionaries' indigenous agents and ministry partners from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries are largely forgotten and unsung. In contrast Ghanaian church history has immortalized the European Basel missionaries. The notion that the Christianization of the Gold Coast was a solely Western missionary endeavor may explain why. Missionary attitudes contributed to such misperceptions. They tended to ignore or considerably minimize the vital role and indispensable agency of many among their indigenous hosts who, to a large extent, welcomed these "strangers from afar," listened to the Gospel accounts, received their teaching, and allowed themselves to be Christianized.

The historiography of Christian missions also served to turn attention away from the contribution of indigenous agents. As Brian Stanley insightfully observes,

Until the 1960s the majority of historical writing on Christian missions took the form of enthusiastic Christian biographies of missionary heroes or of encyclopedic official histories of the different missionary societies.⁶

Indeed, many biographies of missionaries exist in the home countries of the former mission organizations and agencies, lauding their great work and achievements in foreign lands and often hostile mission fields.⁷

Careful examination of available historical records, however, reveals not only the presence of indigenous assistants working closely with the foreign missionaries, but also their indispensable contribution as interpreters, catechists, teachers, and social engineers.⁸ Indigenous workers provided necessary liaison

⁶. Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, Eng.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 30.

⁷. A major challenge confronting researchers and church historians in Ghana today is difficulty in accessing the archives of the Basel Mission, located as they are in Basel, Switzerland. When funding for research and travel is available, language poses a challenge, for many relevant documents are in (old) German. Until changes are made (such as lodging digital copies of the Basel Mission Ghana Archives in universities in Ghana) the situation will remain the same—and the study of World Christianity will be the poorer for it.

⁸. The Basel Mission reserved the title of "missionary" for workers from Basel or from outside the Gold Coast. That some of those missionaries had little formal instruction and were not better educated than the mission's indigenous African workers made no difference. Often the indigenous workers were catechists or teacher-catechists. In

between Western mission agencies and the indigenous people.⁹ Their pivotal role was paramount for the 1853 Basel missionary field conference:

The catechist institutes at Akropong and Osu (Christiansborg) shall train God-fearing young men from among the congregations as teachers and catechists. They should have the necessary gifts and a decent primary school standard. *Later they should assist the missionaries in their work amongst the congregations and the pagans.*¹⁰

The early missionaries generally used the labels “heathen” and “pagan” for Africans prior to conversion.¹¹ After conversion from “heathenism,” these same persons would themselves become bearers of the truth of the Gospel to their own people as catechists, teachers, agents, and pastors. They worked at first for the home churches of the mission organizations and, later, for the indigenous congregations that emerged from their labors. In their own day these indigenous heroes often bore the brunt of fierce opposition from traditional religionists and suffered rejection and exclusion from the very compatriots they sought to bring to faith. Now, in the twenty-first century, they are scarcely acknowledged for the worthwhile contribution they made. With their memories buried in moth-devoured chronicles and diaries locked away in old cupboards and official church records, they remain mostly forgotten.

Representative but Unknown Pioneers

Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba were two of these pioneer indigenous catechist-teachers. They labored at mission stations located in towns and villages situated in the Gold Coast mission field superintended by the Basel Mission, including centers such as Akuapem, Kyebi, Accra, and their environs. As did many of their colleagues, they wrote their own “Biographies,” which were sent to the Basel

exceptional cases (e.g., Carl Christian Reindorf, David Asante, and Theophilus Opoku) catechists were later ordained as pastors.

⁹. See Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Rules 8 and 9, “Appointment of Catechists and Teachers . . .,” in *Rules for Catechists and Teachers* (Accra: Scottish Mission Book Depot, 1944), 3–4.

¹⁰. Basel Mission Archives, “Missionarskonferenz Christiansborg,” July 2, 1853; cited in Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 148; my emphasis.

¹¹. I have retained the terms “heathen(s)” and “pagan(s)” to maintain fidelity to the texts of the original documents and to reflect the terms’ currency in the late nineteenth century.

Philip Kwabi

Philip Kwabi, “Katechist of Mamfe,” was “born at Akuropong [in] 1835” soon after Basel Mission began work in the Gold Coast.¹³ He attended Basel Mission schools and became a teacher in Akropong in 1857. He was appointed a catechist in September 1859. Two years later he was transferred to Aburi to teach in the boys’ school there and was also requested to “preach in the chapel during the week by turns & sometimes on Sundays.”¹⁴ His preaching assignments took him outside Aburi to Konkonuru, Nsakyé, Nsaba Adamorobe, Agyamewa, Tutu, Obosomase, and Ahwerease.

In Aburi, Kwabi was happy and was loved by the Christians. The chief of the town also liked him, giving him land and a palm plantation for his personal use. Thus attached to the people and to the land, he found it difficult to leave when he was transferred after only two years to Tutu. Nonetheless, he settled well into his work of preaching and nurturing his small flock from just two Christians when he first arrived in Tutu into a forty-member congregation. They loved him dearly and felt quite bereft when again, after only two years, he was transferred to Anum in 1864. There he was tasked to

begin the Mission work with Mr. Old Rottmann & Fuserer & Clause . . . as teacher, interpreter & itinerant preacher to Boasow, Taremani, Toseri, Nanyo, Amanfo, Amoanna, Apenkwa, Tekyi, Ahotome, Abotia, & Sokodei.¹⁵

He taught the seven boys in the day school and preached at his home on Sundays

¹². Basel Mission required aspirants to the ordained ministry to submit a “biography” (or, more accurately, autobiography). Typically it traced the subject’s spiritual journey since Christian conversion, very much in the style of the Evangelical conversion story. During the service of consecration, each candidate would read an abridged form of his biography. See Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Rule 6, “The Consecration of Catechists,” in *Rules for Catechists and Teachers*, 3, and Daniel Saba, “Annual Report for the Year 1884,” 4.

¹³. Philip Kwabi, “Biography of Ph. Kwabi,” Adukrom, June 5, 1893, Film Ms 29, D-1, Reel 62, 1893, Basel Mission Ghana Archives, Special Collections/Yale Divinity School Library (hereinafter BMGA SC/YDSL; unless otherwise indicated, reports and biographical materials by Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba cited in this chapter are courtesy of BMGA SC/YDSL).

Hereafter, in lieu of “Akuropong,” I use the more modern spelling “Akropong.”

¹⁴. Kwabi, “Biography,” 3.

¹⁵. Kwabi, “Biography,” 3.

in the forenoon, and in the streets in the evening.

Philip Kwabi's "Biography" gives dates only for when he was "fitted as a teacher in the Akuropong Sch . . . got married . . . was appointed Catechist . . . was transferred to Aburi . . . [and] had [his] appointment as teacher, interpreter & itinerant preacher" to begin his ministry. No dates appear for his ordination as indigenous pastor.¹⁶ He is first presented as the rebellious son of an elder in his town, sent to the mission school by his father.¹⁷ Kwabi states that he was

of bad temper so that once when I was severely punished by my teacher without proper reason I was about to commit suicide, but the Lord prevented me from such sinfull [*sic*] crimes & has preserved me up to this day.¹⁸

According to Kwabi, his father persevered in spite of his truancy, as he was "very particular about his education," and sent him to the Wesleyan School in Cape Coast. When he became the focus of a conflict between the Danes and the Dutch, he was dismissed.¹⁹

On his return from Cape Coast, Philip resumed his studies at the mission school in Akropong. There he discovered to his disappointment that his former classmates had preceded him in becoming Christians; because of the frequent interruptions in his school attendance, he had missed much of the Christian instruction they had received.

At my arrival some of the School boys had become Christians there [*sic*] were the first Christians in our Mission, from our town. Viz: - Dav. Asantey, Paul Keteku, William Yirenkyi, Isaac Adow. I was sorry that I was not among them. . . . I was very sorry that some of my school mates

¹⁶. Kwabi, "Biography," 3. Following the practice of the time, his appointment as catechist would have taken place in a special service. It is probable that Kwabi's "Biography" marked his appointment as a catechist. We may therefore assume that he was ordained in 1893, for which occasion he wrote the "Biography." See Kwabi, "Biography," 5-6, 15.

¹⁷. Kwabi's father is not identified by name in the "Biography." Many other personal family details are missing, including any mention of his mother or her name. He mentions his marriage in 1858, the year after he was "fitted as a teacher" (3), and his being "blessed with three children two males and a female" (8), but there is no mention of siblings. He states that his father "sent me & one of his nephews to School, but the nephew did not stay in the school & ran away & did not return again, I was left alone to attend the school with the others which the elders of the town gave them to School" (1). This seems to suggest that he may have been an only child.

¹⁸. Kwabi, "Biography," 1.

¹⁹. Kwabi, "Biography," 2.

have become Xtians before me.²⁰

Soon after his return, he was caught eating “through ignorance” food forbidden by his “father’s fetish” and was derided by his “heathen relatives” who expected him to be killed by the fetish. An unnamed West Indian Basel missionary, however, encouraged him to “believe in the Lord that there will be no harm” to him. He did; and the dreaded misfortune did not occur.

Not being in the first group of Christians in the mission school seems to have stirred in young Philip a desire to become a Christian. But he was too timid to tell the missionaries and waited until the boys were asked if they wanted to receive instruction and become Christians. Thus, in 1848, he and four other boys were baptized by Johannes Christian Dieterle at Akropong. Three years later he was received into “our Mission Seminary to prepare myself well for the great work.”²¹

Because his father punished him whenever he ran away from school, Philip saw his father as a harsh man, stating, “In all this I thought him to be too severe against me not to love me but future has revealed to me his kind love towards me.”²² When he finally “had the mind to reward him [for] the past kindness,” it was too late, for his father died while he was in seminary.²³

After ten years as a teacher and catechist in Aburi, Tutu, and Anum, Kwabi spent additional years in Akyem, Mampong, Mamfe, and Abetifi in the Kwahu district as well as in Adukrom. These were some of the most difficult mission fields at the time.²⁴ Frustrated at the lack of converts after two years in Mampong, Kwabi noted:

I consulted with my Xtians at Mampong of what to do with this obstinate Mampongs who had determined not to believe the gospel in no way all of them were still heathens, & not one of them had become a Xtian; we came to the decision to be united in prayer to the Lord of the harvest on the behalf of the Mampongs.²⁵

He arrived in Abetifi in August 1880 and had to teach in the boarding school as well as to oversee a dizzying list of congregations as a chapel preacher

²⁰. Kwabi, “Biography,” 2.

²¹. Kwabi, “Biography,” 3.

²². Kwabi, “Biography,” 1–2.

²³. Kwabi, “Biography,” 2.

²⁴. The Kyerepong people of Mampong, Mamfe, and Adukrom were notorious for their worship of idols and hatred for anything Christian, whether things or persons. In the Akyem and Kwahu districts, conflict between Basel Mission church personnel and the traditional leadership resulted in violence.

²⁵. Kwabi, “Biography,” 9.

and itinerant preacher. Sometimes he had to make the long and arduous journeys alone.

Now I got my appointment from our Local committee to Abetifi as a teacher in the Boarding School, itinerant preacher, preaching on Sundays in the chapel & street preaching in the evening in town. My itinerant preaching extended so far as throughout the whole Kwamu, with its adjacent countries as:- Asante Akyem, Kumawau, Agogo, Bepowso, Apapasu, Nkubem, Alaba, Guanmu, Krakye; Eastside Boem, Nkonya, Panno, Amvoe, Sohaem Vae, Tonko, Tareman, Bosow, Toseng, Nanyo, Anum, Akwamu; On the south as Akyem, Begoro, Fankyeneko, Anyinam, Asumafo, Tweapease, Amonom, Asuom, Forman, Vankese, Apradam & Esase. All these countries, towns, villages & cottages I have been travelling as itinerant preacher, sometimes with Mr. G. Dilger & sometimes with Mr Ramseyer & *sometimes alone*.²⁶

Kwabi's ministry was marked by much suffering and persecution. Although he rejected correction and discipline as a young boy, he gradually learned to entrust his every move to God. In an annual report from Adukrom in 1893, he was determined not to be discouraged, "for the work is the Lord[']s and the final victory is his."²⁷ After a particularly difficult year of bitter persecution in Adukrom in 1901 and following unsuccessful attempts by Kwabi and missionary J. Schweizer to revive the church there, Kwabi was ordered out of Adukrom to start a new mission station in Awukugua, in spite of the head chief's sympathetic intervention.²⁸

Daniel Saba

Daniel Saba was born in Christiansborg in 1854 "during the bombardment of this town by the English Government." His father, Ama Ding (Ama the black), and mother, Norley, "were both heathens."²⁹ Seeking safety, Daniel's father fled

²⁶. Kwabi, "Biography," 12; my emphasis.

²⁷. Philip Kwabi, "Annual Report about Various Districts, Adukrom," March 2, 1893, D-1, Reel 63, 1893, p. 1.

²⁸. Philip Kwabi, "Half-yearly Report of Adukrom District," October 1903, D-1, Reel 87, 1903. See also "Yearly Report of Adukrom District," January 20, 1902, D-1, Reel 85, 1902.

²⁹. Daniel Saba, "Biography of Dan Saba" [copied for Rev. J. J. Weiss], Christiansborg, June 15, 1884, in D-1, Reel 47, 1884, 2. The people's refusal to pay the poll tax imposed by the British colonial authorities culminated in a series of riots in 1853.

with his family to Angola, where Daniel spent his childhood as a refugee.³⁰ When he was six years old, his family returned to Christiansborg, and Ama Ding sent Daniel to attend the Basel Mission school. Many first-generation Gold Coast Christians lived in the households of their Basel Mission teachers, and young Daniel joined the residence of missionary Christian W. Locher. Two years later, on September 28, 1862, he was baptized by Locher.

As a child Daniel had no African or indigenous role models to inspire him to think that he might one day become a minister. His “Biography,” written in 1884, recalls that

there were only European Ministers & [I] never think that any African who would by and by become a minister as well as an European. But in the progress of time & the work we have had several native Ministers. This kind of office I myself in the Mission Work [did] for years though I never count myself one worthy to hold this post.³¹

During Daniel’s 1864 end-of-year examinations, the Basel Mission school inspector I. Harnisch privately encouraged him to study diligently so that he could go on to seminary at Akropong. Daniel found the idea that he might “learn Greek, Hebrew & Theological Sciences to become a minister” too incongruous to consider: “I laughed at what he said & doubted because I was too young to think of high things in future.”³²

At the end of boarding school, however, when he was asked what “would be my business in future,” he replied that he would like to be a teacher. In 1866 he was accepted into the grammar school in Christiansborg. Two years later, Daniel was confirmed by Elias Schrenck, who gave him a Scripture text: “The Lord is faithful who shall stablish you and keep you from evil” (2 Thess. 3:3 KJV).³³ In spite of many difficulties throughout his stay in the grammar school, including his mother’s death, he held tenaciously to the hope he received from that text. Upon completion of his studies, he requested admission into the

In a bid to enforce payment, the British naval forces, led by HMS *Scourge*, bombarded Christiansborg for two days in September 1854, destroying a large part of the town.

³⁰. No evidence has come to light in archival documents of a town or village in nineteenth-century Gold Coast named “Angola.” A plausible explanation is that Saba was referring rather to Abokobi, the town to which most refugees from Christiansborg and Osu fled during the British bombardment.

³¹. Daniel Saba, “Biography of Dan Saba” [copied for Rev. J. J. Weiss], Christiansborg, June 15, 1884, in D-1, Reel 47, 1884, 1.

³². Saba, “Biography,” 3.

³³. Saba, “Biography,” 3.

theological seminary.³⁴ He was thirty years old when he was ordained on June 15, 1884, at Christiansborg Chapel.³⁵ By that time he had already worked in the mission for many years—at Agbowodo, Obutu, and various other outstations and congregations—having been confirmed and commissioned as a teacher-catechist on September 6, 1868.³⁶

Saba worked for about ten years in the Abokobi district. He stated that he had “the impression that the congregation is a large congregation & the mother Church of the out stations.”³⁷ His work took him also to Addah (Big Ada and Addah-Fo), Kwanyako, Obutu, Berraku, Sukpe, and Tefle. It was tedious work, involving much walking, teaching, and preaching, and his half-year report of August 1893 from Abokobi gives an idea of his activities:

I received my instructions of removal to Abokobi in February [1893] . . . from Mr. Kolle the Principle [*sic*] of the Abokobi District. I have to care for Asoman, Kwabenyan & Kwantanon besides the Abokobi congregation. I have to give two hours lesson in the Girls’ School in the week, Sunday morning preaching. Class-meeting with women on Tuesday at 2 o’cl. P.M. (Class meeting with young men on Wednesday evening at 7 o’cl. P.M.) Thursday evening Bible-meeting at 7 o’cl. Friday evening . . . Class-meeting with Old men.³⁸

Besides twice weekly lessons for catechumens, Saba was required to set up a Sunday school in which young people could learn to read and write in Ga, the indigenous language of the people of the area, and in English. He was assigned additional responsibilities as well:

Lessons to candidates for baptism twice in the week, Sunday School stablished [*sic*] in which young men and Girls attend to learn reading and writing in Ga & English. Myself & Mr. Bartimeus are Teachers; Mr Bartimeus employs some of the evening hours in teaching the young men in singing four voices, which gives great delight to the young-men.

³⁴. There seems to have been another “biography” (not available to me) that Saba sent in to support his application for admission to the theological seminary in Akropong. In addition, two pages (4 and 5) were missing from Saba’s 1884 six-page microfilmed “biography” to which I did have access. It is possible that excerpts from the earlier “biography” may have been included in the latter one.

³⁵. Daniel Saba, “Annual Report for the Year 1884 Addah,” in D-1, Reel 47, 1884, 3–4.

³⁶. Saba, “Biography,” 6, 3.

³⁷. Daniel Saba, “Half Year’s Report, Abokobi,” August 26, 1893, in D-1, Reel 62, 1893, 2.

³⁸. Saba, “Half Year’s Report,” 1–2.

Sometimes we employ the Sunday Sch. hours in Preaching either in the heathen Quarters or in the adjacent villages. Attendance very good. . . . Heathen villages all around us, Some of which I use to frequent in the week days.³⁹

Street preaching took up most of the Basel Mission's catechist-teachers' time, requiring them to walk many miles to the many outstations in their districts, and this was Saba's practice. It was the main avenue for getting people interested in the Gospel and in Christianity.

Relationship between the Basel Missionaries and Indigenous Catechist-Teachers

The relationship between the Basel missionaries from Europe and the indigenous African catechist-teachers functioned at various levels. The European missionaries were perceived to be the "professional" missionaries and were treated with great deference and respect. Not only had they received training in Europe, mostly at Basel, and had come to the Gold Coast as bearers of the Gospel, but much more, they had left everything to bring the Gospel to a country of "benighted" people, a sacrifice appreciated by the indigenous agents. Thus Kwabi responded with a sense of gratitude and humility when asked why he was toiling to preach and build a church in the bush instead of getting himself a "fine home to enjoy himself."

"I don't understand, said the man, that you have the heart to undergo all these troubles"; my reply was short & lively. Shall I sit in a fine house & let men perish for want of a preacher? I am not worth of the Europeans who had left their fine homes & knocking about in this dense forest & even the Europeans are not worth in comparison with our Lord the Saviour of mankind, the Lord of heaven & earth who left his heavenly throne, for our wretched world even died on the cross for our souls, salvation, such unworthy creatures as we are.⁴⁰

Perhaps that is why Kwabi was able to endure much persecution from the "obstinate" people he met in his work, straining himself without complaining. He considered himself an integral part of the work to which he had committed himself and was grateful for the privilege of joining the Europeans in the mission of making Christ known to his compatriots.

I feel confident that I do not regret at all for what I am doing; it is my

³⁹. Saba, "Half Year's Report," 2.

⁴⁰. Kwabi, "Biography," 14.

duty to help our Mission & do not count them as strangers, but brethren in Xt & spiritual fathers. They had done more for me than what I am doing for them.⁴¹

Basel Mission's Priorities in Mission and Evangelization

Even though indigenous Basel Mission agents worked extensively in remote communities, they had to work within the framework provided by the mission. When the Basel missionaries arrived in the Gold Coast in 1828, they came with five “very carefully thought-out priorities.” Those mission objectives applied to both the workers trained in Basel and those yet to be identified and trained among the indigenes. The five pillars, as identified by Noel Smith, were

to become acclimatized, to take time over the selection of a permanent site for the mission, to master the local language at all costs, to begin the actual mission activity by founding a school, and lastly, to present the Gospel with love and patience.⁴²

The effectiveness of all Basel missionaries and indigenous agents was judged by each person's knowledge and mastery of the five objectives and the extent to which each individual fulfilled them. The way each worker functioned to carry out those objectives is basic for understanding the relationship between the Basel missionaries and the indigenous agents.

Adapting to New Climes

Serving as they did in their own context, the indigenous agents did not find the first objective of “becoming acclimatized” difficult. Although Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba worked in areas outside their hometowns, their writings give no indication of any problems with acclimatization. As a native of Akropong in the hilly range of Akuapem, Kwabi would not have found the climate too different in the higher altitudes of Abetifi and Aburi. Saba, for his part, remained mostly in the flat plains around Christiansborg, Accra, and Abokobi. (The rules governing the assignment of catechists and teachers at that time found it inadvisable to “appoint a catechist to work in his native town.”⁴³) In any case, the indigenes were sturdier and of stronger constitution than their European

⁴¹. Kwabi, “Biography,” 6.

⁴². Smith, *Presbyterian Church of Ghana*, 28.

⁴³. Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Rule 7, “Appointment of Catechists and Teachers . . . ,” in *Rules for Catechists and Teachers*, 3.

colleagues, and they could better withstand the long, arduous trekking in the hinterland to teach, set up preaching posts, and build outstations.

Setting up Camp

The second objective—which required agents to “take time over the selection of a permanent site for the mission”—appears to have been the sole preserve of the Basel missionaries from Europe. When Andreas Riis, for instance, arrived in Akropong in 1836, he built his residence and mission house almost single-handedly, in spite of the “considerable technical difficulties” he encountered. This feat earned him the respect and admiration of the Akropong people, who gave him the nickname *Osiadan* (house builder).⁴⁴

Locals would have assisted the missionaries from Basel with identifying the social leaders of the communities to whom requests for land were to be made. Land granted was used for building the Basel schools, mission houses, and catechists’ houses as well as for the “Salems,” that is, community dwelling areas for the new Christian converts. Obtaining grants of land, however, was not always devoid of difficulty. Kwabi refers to a proposal by the chief of Adukrom to relocate the church, a proposal that he and the teacher rejected because of inadequate ventilation.

The Chief there had this proposal to remove the station and build it on the North of the town, but we objected [to] it as there is no good air as the present one. For the present is situated [on] high ground and that proposal of the chief is little low in comparison with the first.⁴⁵

In addition to the unfavorable siting, Kwabi surmised that the land was also susceptible to eventual dispute by the locals who would take advantage of the chiefly connection to impose their traditional religious laws on the Christians. His advice against the chief’s offer showed his foresight:

Furthermore I did remind them of future trouble which they will suffer from the heathens for they often trouble the Christians forcing fetish laws on them which always brings dispute between both, much less they will settle on the Chief’s land.⁴⁶

It was not enough to acquire land for the mission schools or churches. The course of wisdom was also to reject “good” offers that would lead eventually to conflict between the various social groups.

⁴⁴. Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 99.

⁴⁵. Kwabi, “Yearly Report of Adukrom,” 1902, 6.

⁴⁶. Kwabi, “Yearly Report of Adukrom,” 1902, 6–7.

More challenging than identifying and obtaining a site suitable for a mission station was the actual construction of the buildings. In remote areas, indigenous agents were often put in charge of this aspect of the mission's presence.⁴⁷ For instance, a few days before his ordination, Saba was suddenly transferred from Obutu to Addah to build the mission house and start the Basel Mission's work there. The "heathen" people there had expected their idols to strike him with an illness and thus halt his construction of the new mission house "of which I have toiled so much."⁴⁸

He built the mission house all by himself, with no help from the locals who opposed him fiercely. Saba also noted that he would have had more boys in his school but for resistance by the parents at Addah who did not want their sons involved in the hard work of building and therefore prevented them from attending the school.⁴⁹

Communication, But in What Language?

"Mastery of the local language at all costs," the third Basel Mission objective, was crucial for both the European missionaries and the indigenous agents. For the foreigners, language learning was indispensable. It supplied the only means of entry into the culture, worldview, and heart of the local populations for preaching of the Gospel message. Without the language, there would be no evangelization, no converts, and no fruit from the mission effort. In short, the mission would be a total failure. On arrival in the Gold Coast, therefore, the Basel missionaries decided to live among the locals and immediately set to learning Ga, the language of Christiansborg. Later they would also learn the Twi language spoken in the Akuapem hills.⁵⁰ The outstanding work done by Johannes Zimmermann for Ga and Johann Gottlieb Christaller for Twi bears monumental testimony to their assiduity, selflessness, and sheer dogged determination in pursuit of the third

⁴⁷. George MacDonald, *The Gold Coast, Past and Present: A Short Description of the Country and Its People* (New York: Negro Univ. Press, 1969; orig. 1898), 324.

⁴⁸. Saba, "Annual Report for the Year 1884 Addah," 2; my emphasis.

⁴⁹. Saba, "Annual Report . . . 1884," 2.

⁵⁰. Johannes Zimmerman and Johann Gottlieb Christaller did notable lexicographic work in Ga and Twi. The dictionaries they developed in both languages are still considered relevant today. See, in particular, Christaller's collaborative work with Zimmermann and another Basel missionary, Christian Wilhelm Locher: *A Dictionary, English, Tshi (Asante), Akra, Tshi [Chwee] Comprising as Dialects: Akán (Asànté, Akém, Akuapém &c) and Fànté; Akra [Accra] Connected with Adangme; Gold Coast, West Africa* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1874).

mission objective.⁵¹

Yet, the Basel missionaries could not have accomplished all that they did without indigenous assistance and support.⁵² For instance, the missionaries initially worked through local translators and interpreters and eventually through the Basel Mission's indigenous agents. Philip Kwabi served as an indigenous language instructor and interpreter. He was, in fact, appointed specifically as "teacher, interpreter & itinerant preacher" to Anum and the surrounding communities.⁵³ It is not farfetched to assume that he assisted Gottlieb Dilger and Fritz Ramseyer with interpretation during his frequent journeys into the Gold Coast hinterland with them as itinerant preacher.⁵⁴ Daniel Saba, a native of Christiansborg, in addition to his already full schedule of tasks and preaching journeys, found time to teach the Ga language to European missionaries: "Some hours also I spare in giving *Ga* lessons to the Missionaries who are my co-workers in Abokobi."⁵⁵ He also taught Ga to indigenous agents from other parts of the country. His language skills would be put to further good use in Bible translation.

Education and Development

⁵¹. See Johannes Zimmermann, *An English-Accra or Ga Dictionary* (Stuttgart, 1858). See also his *Grammatical Sketch of the Akra- or Ga-Language, with Some Specimens of It from the Mouth of the Natives* (Stuttgart: Steinkoph, 1858; rev. ed. 1885). Zimmermann's codification of Ga grammar into a literary language and his translation of the whole Bible into the Ga language of the coastal people of Osu, Accra, merit unbounded appreciation.

See Johann Gottlieb Christaller, *A Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi (Chwee, Twi): with a Grammatical Introduction and Appendices on the Geography of the Gold Coast and Other Subjects* (Basel: Evangelical Missionary Society, 1881; 2nd ed., 1993), and Christaller, *Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi* (Basel: Trübner, 1875).

⁵². Christaller was greatly helped by Jonathan Palmer Bekoe and David Asante in his translation of the Twi Bible and in creating a modest library of documents in Twi. See *The Basel Mission Centenary: 1828–1928* (Accra: Scottish Mission, 1928), 8. Similarly, Theophilus Opoku, son of the Akropong chief's linguist and an indigenous agent and pastor of the Basel Mission, contributed his linguistic acuity and knowledge of "pure Twi" to Christaller's translation work. See Maureen O. Iheanacho, *Theophilus Opoku—Indigenous Pastor and Missionary Theologian, 1842–1913* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2014), 3–4.

⁵³. Kwabi, "Biography," 12.

⁵⁴. Kwabi, "Biography," 12.

⁵⁵. Saba, "Half Year's Report," 1893, 2.

As much as the locals needed to be able to communicate with the missionaries and to learn the English language, the educational policy of the Basel Mission in their primary and middle schools as well as in the seminaries was to teach in the indigenous languages: Ga in Christiansborg and Accra, and Twi in Akropong as well as in other Akan towns and villages. The Basel Mission took the initiative here in direct fulfillment of its fourth mission objective, namely, “to begin the actual mission activity by founding a school.” Accordingly, the missionaries’ first pursuit was to establish a school as soon as they settled in any community.

Many of the indigenous children who attended the mission schools, especially the boys, ended up living in the houses of the European missionaries. Some were sent there by their parents and relatives, while others were taken in by the missionaries. From the students in its schools, the Mission selected many who were to become indigenous agents—as teachers, catechists, and pastors—for training at the seminaries in Christiansborg and Akropong. Akropong recorded the highest number of boys who received Basel Mission training; besides Philip Kwabi, the group included those he described as “the first Christians in our Mission, from our town,” namely, David Asante, Paul Keteku, William Yirenkyi, and Isaac Adow.⁵⁶

These first products of the Basel Mission schools and seminaries in turn taught others. Kwabi was grateful to God for the many boys who received Christian instruction from him who continued as indigenous agents.

There are many examples besides which if I should record, all would take too much time. Only I thank the Lord that *many of my school boys are now in our Mission works as Pastors, catechists & Teachers at present.*

This is the doing of the Lord & it is marvel in our eyes.⁵⁷

The detailed periodic reports that Kwabi, Saba, and others sent to the Basel Mission home office trace the growth of attendance in the schools and churches as well as describing the sociocultural, political, and religious events that took place throughout the length and breadth of the Gold Coast mission field.⁵⁸

Evangelizing the “Heathen”

The fifth Basel Mission objective, “to present the Gospel with love and patience,” proved to be a testing ground for the missionaries, for their commitment to the love of Christ and their pursuit of the goal of evangelizing the “heathen” of

⁵⁶. Kwabi, “Biography,” 2.

⁵⁷. Kwabi, “Biography,” 5; my emphasis.

⁵⁸. Discussion of the contribution made by products of Basel Mission schools and seminaries lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

Africa's Gold Coast would cost many of them their very lives.⁵⁹ Patience was sometimes in short supply on both sides as the missionaries could not understand why it took some of the locals so long before accepting Christ, nor could the indigenous agents explain why some parents refused to allow their children to attend the mission schools when it was “obviously” to their benefit. The skepticism of the locals, however, slowed the pace of the mission work. Nevertheless, effective communication of the Gospel was carried on through much street preaching, teaching, and Christian instruction for baptismal candidates—and through the examples the missionaries and indigenous agents provided of living out their faith in sometimes trying circumstances.

When, for instance, the townspeople, who had previously resisted Saba's preaching, saw that he did not fall sick because of the “power of God” which “preserved me among them till this very day,” they relented and offered to send their troublesome young men to learn of God from him. They claimed to have finally understood that this would “be useful to their town to bring young men & boys to a proper stay [*sic*] of living.”⁶⁰

Conflict and Reconciliation

“Presenting the Gospel with love and patience” sometimes took the form of mediating between people in conflict to bring about reconciliation. Both Kwabi and Saba played the role of mediator. Kwabi's “Biography” has an account of his journeys in 1884 to Agogo and Asante Akyem to broker peace between the two communities. In that instance, the process that had begun with missionary Gottlieb Dilger in 1883 was completed by Kwabi alone in 1884. Kwabi writes:

In 1884 I was sent over to Agogo by the order of Rev. G. Dilger as peace maker where *I stayed 40 days as peace maker between the Agogoes & Asante Akyems*. The chief of Agogo did send messengers to Rev. G. Dilger about it [he] therefore sent me with some of our competents [*sic*] Xtians.

⁵⁹. Andrew F. Walls, “The Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context,” in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 201–2. According to Walls, Protestant Pietism's religious dynamic had already produced Christians with a martyr spirit. The history of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast is marked by a high mortality rate, with “at least 141 missionaries and their wives buried there, not counting the young children,” between 1828 and 1913, a mere eight and a half decades. See Iheanacho, *Theophilus Opoku*, 11, and Paul Jenkins, *A Short History of the Basel Mission* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1989), 6.

⁶⁰. Saba, “Annual Report for the Year 1884 Addah,” 2–3.

There I had the chance; sometimes in proclaiming the tidings of the gospel to both parties. *Had I not been there, then they would have destroyed themselves; but by the help of God; I did put them to peace.*⁶¹

Saba's half-year report from Abokobi in August 1893 mentions a similar peacemaking role he played between the chief of Abokobi on his deathbed and the chief's own brother.

Since my arrival there have [been] five dead cases, amongst whom was the Chief of Abokobi the first man who died few weeks after my arrival in the station. He was sick already before I came in. . . . He had some old row with his surviving brother. *I called for him, settled and made peace between them and [he] breathed his last few hours after.*⁶²

By that act Saba not only reconciled the chief with his brother, but he also helped him to die a good death and in peace.

Beyond street preaching and giving Christian instruction, Kwabi had to contend with brazen acts of indiscipline by the "heathen" people in Adukrom. It was not enough that they mocked him; they even threatened to flog him publicly. Still he prayed for God's mercy on the "wretched sinners":

Some of them are so imprudent to speak against Mr J. Schweizer who is so tender-hearted towards them. All his tender affection has no effect in them in any way at all. All this kindness done to them from us they render evil for good.⁶³

Social Life and Community

Due to their knowledge of the business of mission and their experience in the evangelization of "pagan" and "heathen" tribes, the missionaries—whether consciously or not—presented themselves as "those who knew what mission was about." After all, much prayer, thought, and consideration had gone into their decision to go to the Gold Coast and into working out the Basel Mission's five objectives. The missionaries operated in a certain hierarchy: while members of the home board in Basel formulated mission policy for the society, the missionaries in the Gold Coast field carried it out under the supervision of the field president, and under him, the district and station presidents. Inevitably such an arrangement led to feelings of superiority and inferiority. The school inspectors ranked somewhat higher than the missionaries, and junior colleagues

⁶¹. Kwabi, "Biography," 13; my emphases.

⁶². Saba, "Half-Year's Report," August 15, 1893, 3; my emphasis.

⁶³. Kwabi, "Yearly Report of Adukrom District," January 20, 1902, 5.

perceived the field presidents and supervisors as superiors.⁶⁴ The indigenes, for their part, had a similar perception of the missionaries as being “those who knew what mission was about.” For instance, Kwabi referred ambivalently to the seminary authorities in Akropong, both speaking of them as “my Superiours” and in the same “Biography” calling them his “brethren in Xt & spiritual fathers.”⁶⁵

The social distinctions between the Basel missionaries and the indigenous agents were reflected in the formal salutations that opened the half-year and annual reports by Kwabi and Saba: “To the Honourable Committee [of the Evangelical Basel Mission Society],” “My honourable Committee,” and “Through the Local Committee.” Kwabi’s “Biography” was also addressed to the “Honourable Committee.” Interestingly, though, Saba would address his “Biography” to “My dear friends, Countrymen and lovers.” Kwabi signed his “Biography” as “Your humble servant in Xt,” but reports from him to Basel that I reviewed were mostly sent unsigned. Saba signed his “Biography” as “Your most humble & Obedient Servant,” and his reports were signed “Your [truly] obedient servant.”

Sometimes the European missionaries misunderstood the people’s intentions or misread the situation. One such instance was Adolf Mohr’s handling of the Adukrom crisis.⁶⁶ He publicly ordered Kwabi to leave Adukrom instead of dealing directly with the locals and the “senior minister” who had plotted against him. Kwabi claimed that Mohr did nothing to help him “from their malicious dealing but it seems he favours them.”⁶⁷

The indigenous agents, perhaps because they were the ones in the very remote stations, faced the worst instances of persecution from their “heathen” compatriots. Kwabi experienced such with the Kyerepong peoples of Mamfe, Mampong, Adukrom, and Aburi. In Kyebi, he “acknowledged the hostile enmity [*sic*] of the Kyebi King, Amoako Ata against Christianity which is buried in his bosom; who did not like the propagation of the gospel in his territory.”⁶⁸ Amoako Ata was all the more infuriated because Kwabi had compared him unfavorably to the Akuapem king, whom he considered to be not only his inferior but also “a fool to allow his men to become Xtians.”⁶⁹

Cross-Cultural Engagement

⁶⁴. Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 160, 248–50.

⁶⁵. Kwabi, “Biography,” 3, 6.

⁶⁶. Kwabi, “Half-yearly Report of Adukrom District,” 1903,” 5.

⁶⁷. Kwabi, “Half-yearly Report of Adukrom District,” 1903, 3.

⁶⁸. Kwabi, “Biography,” 7.

⁶⁹. Kwabi, “Biography,” 7–8.

Having arrived in the Gold Coast with notions of the cultural deficiency of the indigenous peoples, the Basel missionaries had little understanding of the complexities of the traditional society into which their work of evangelization had thrust them. They may have come with their sparse belongings—packed in wooden coffins, we are told, as a sign of their resolute determination to carry out their work at all costs, including death. Nonetheless, they brought with them cultural, religious, and social baggage from the rationalistic thinking of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century logic of the Enlightenment.

The influence of the Pietistic evangelical mission training and culture is irrefutable. Imparted through the missionaries' language, theology, and perception of mission, it was imbibed by their pupils through the subjects taught at the various educational levels. The missionaries' discourse was infused with Christendom terms that distinguished between "Christians" (Western missionaries) and "heathens" found in the non-Western lands where they worked. With its heavy emphasis on the theology of sin and repentance, self-mortification and penance, and the rule of Satan and his demons in the dark kingdom outside Christendom, nineteenth-century evangelicalism considered non-Western territories as "heathen" and "pagan" lands in dire need of Christianization.⁷⁰ The goal of mission was therefore conceived as the salvation of these lands from satanic siege. Unavoidably, some of the Basel missionaries' blend of Pietistic religious fervor and Enlightenment rationalism colored the thought and language of their pupils. Wording in both Kwabi's and Saba's annual reports show as much; they were marked by references to God's "saving power" to their "benighted country-men."⁷¹ The modes of thought and expression offered by Basel would eventually become the natural means for its indigenous products to express their religious experience and that of the populations with whom they engaged in their work.

⁷⁰. See Walls, "Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context," in *Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 201–2. See also Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797–1860* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 33–35 and 195–214. In chap. 10, "The Perishing Heathen Observed," Gunson comments that in the South Pacific context the "Evangelicals were . . . encouraged to mould their environment according to their own convictions. . . . This need for a lower class was part of the psychology of Evangelical missionaries who substituted the 'poor heathen' for the 'lower orders'" (34–35).

⁷¹. The influence and interference of evangelical and Pietistic language evident in the writings of products of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast, though interesting, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The mission's primary day schools and boarding schools introduced a new form of discipline through physical punishment. Many of the children resisted, especially those from socially recognized families. The son of an elder in the town, Philip Kwabi tells how he nearly committed suicide once when he was "severely punished by his teacher *without proper reason*."⁷² He admitted, though, that his bad temper and struggles against what he termed his "nature" had led him to disobey the mission seminary's house rules.⁷³ When he was again severely punished, this time by the principal, his response was to leave the seminary.

*But through my bad heart, I left the Seminary; in that case I had to learn a hard lesson. I had no peace day & night till I was brought by the Spirit of the Lord to see my folly & wretched state I was. I returned to my superiours as the prodigal son from that time forward. I learnt the ways of the Lord.*⁷⁴

Church Administration

The work of the indigenous agents often went beyond Basel Mission's five-pronged mission strategy. There was so much to do, many villages and towns to preach in, many who needed to hear the Gospel, and many more activities to organize for their growth and nurture in the new faith. The indigenous workers had to start churches right from scratch with new converts and no church building. In some cases, their wives helped out by teaching and organizing the girls and women. When Saba returned to Addah in 1884, his wife assisted him with the women.

When I came I observed again that there was no Class-Meetings either for me or women in the Congregation, therefore have established several Evening-meetings such as Prayer-meeting with the Presbyters every Monday evening attended by myself, Tuesday Evening Bible-meeting as before, *Wednesday Evening Class-meeting with the women by Mrs Saba*, Friday Evening Class-meeting with the men by myself. Teaching in the town every Sunday Afternoon.⁷⁵

⁷². Kwabi, "Biography," 1; my emphasis.

⁷³. Kwabi, "Biography," 1.

⁷⁴. Kwabi, "Biography," 3; my emphasis.

⁷⁵. Saba, "Annual Report for the Year 1884 Addah," 6-7; my emphasis.

Although Mrs. Saba's name is not given, Saba appears to accord respect to his wife and to her role by using the social reference "Mrs." to acknowledge her as a person in her own right. This form of reference is rather unusual, particularly for the wife of an indigenous agent, since in missionary records at the time, wives of European missionaries were

Through their commitment and hard work, indigenous Basel Mission agents such as Daniel Saba and Philip Kwabi helped to transform the early mission congregations into the self-supporting churches they eventually became. One development in the growth of the church was the church tax. For a long time this administrative levy was resisted by the Basel Mission congregations, who saw it as an unnecessary imposition. They did not understand the strange practice of “paying” as members of the church. At Adukrom, Kwabi reported that the church members “did not care to pay their church tax, some of them . . . since three years.”⁷⁶ The people’s strong resistance to the church tax appears to have prompted Saba, in 1894, to write a two-page opinion paper to explain the need for it in order “to help the Missionary work in paying money also.”⁷⁷ His report of February 7, 1894, however, in the course of reviewing his work in 1893, noted with relief that the church members at Abokobi seemed at last to understand the concept of the church tax.

Church taxes paid & the members seem to understand it now, those who didn’t get it timely begged me to exercise patience with them & will settle soon; which they have done in paying by cash or Produce from their farms.⁷⁸

It would take many years of patience and perseverance—and people like Daniel Saba—for the church tax to become integrated into the regular administration of the church that emerged from the early labors of the Basel and indigenous missionaries in the Gold Coast.

A Heritage Worth Preserving: Reclaiming Our Christian Ancestry

Acknowledging the influence of the Basel Mission in the preparation of church

generally listed as “Little m.” See John Harris, *We Wish We’d Done More: Ninety Years of CMS and Aboriginal Issues in North Australia* (Adelaide: Openbook, 1998), 128: “In those days [i.e., 1930s], missionary wives were not missionaries. It was a standing joke among missionary wives that they were designated ‘little ems’ because their existence was only acknowledged in CMS records by a lower-case ‘m’ in brackets after their husbands’ names.” See also Keith Hart, *Little Em (m)* (Nightcliff, N.T., Australia: Greenfingers, 1994), and Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, Gender, and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2013), 57–58.

⁷⁶. Daniel Saba, “Annual Report of 1902, Adukrom,” January 20, 1902, 1–2.

⁷⁷. Daniel Saba, “IV, The Church Tax,” November 19, 1894, in Abokobi D-1, Reel 62, 1894, 2.

⁷⁸. Daniel Saba, “Annual Report, Abokobi,” February 7, 1894, in D-1, Reel 63, 1894, 5. Saba may also have written on other subjects since this document was numbered “IV,” which would indicate three others before it.

agents for service, the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, in its second Rule for catechists and teachers, states, inter alia, the enduring purpose of the training given to them:

That purpose has been to help men to enter more fully into the mind of Christ, and to prepare them by training them *to share in the upbuilding of His Church and the extension of His kingdom.*⁷⁹

The vital role played by the indigenous church agents of the Basel Mission as “midwives” of what in 1926 became the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast is further highlighted in the same Rule’s third paragraph:

The Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast *owes its being*, in the Providence of God, to the work of the Basel Missionaries and *to the catechists, teachers, and preachers whom they trained.*⁸⁰

It is noteworthy that the writers of the Rules were keen to emphasize that the Basel missionaries did not achieve the results they did in the Gold Coast without indigenous agency. Training of local people to take over the serious work of evangelization and mission was one of the Basel Mission’s significant objectives. Selected from among the local population, these agents provided skills the European missionaries lacked—namely, indigenous language, cultural sensitivity, knowledge of the terrain, and understanding of the traditional religion and spiritual worldview as well as strategic ways of reaching out to their own people. Whereas the Basel missionaries provided the conceptual and methodological direction in the task of mission, the indigenous agents provided the hands and feet, literally carrying the Gospel into the world of their people, usually with far-reaching consequences.⁸¹

Recognizing the indigenous agents’ valuable liaising role, the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast (now Presbyterian Church of Ghana) zealously guarded its Basel Mission heritage by dedicating much attention to the training of catechists and teachers.

Recovering Memory: Lest We Forget Again!

⁷⁹. Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Rule 2, “Training for Service,” in *Rules for Catechists and Teachers*, 1; my emphasis.

⁸⁰. Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Rule 2, “Training for Service,” in *Rules for Catechists and Teachers*, 2; my emphasis.

⁸¹. Writing in 1898, MacDonald (*Gold Coast*, 324) noted that “the Mission houses, all erected by native labour, are now to be reckoned among the best habitations in the colony, and stand as an example of what can be accomplished by native hands when superintended by European minds.”

It is sad that in spite of their forebears' laudable contributions, both the biological and spiritual descendants of the indigenous agents of the Basel Mission, particularly in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), have largely forgotten them.⁸² The records and archival documents that normally should preserve their memory have largely disappeared. During my research in Ghana's Eastern Region (March–July 2015), I was shocked to discover that even with the biographies and reports they wrote so assiduously, many in the church had not even heard about them. In some churches, not a few of the church "chronicles" or diaries, especially those dating from the late nineteenth century, had been discarded or destroyed.

One minister lamented what he described as the apparent ignorance or indifference of his church's officers and members who could not appreciate the significance of these materials. He told me how, on his arrival at the church in 2013, some "old" books among a heap of rubbish had caught his eye. On closer examination, and to his horror, he discovered that the old books were actually church chronicles and diaries dating from the turn of the twentieth century. Sadly, he was able to retrieve only four of them, one with many pages already missing. Others—we will never know how many—had already been destroyed in previous cleanup exercises and bonfires. As the minister explained, the congregation in question had been in the process of expansion and was building a new chapel. Thus at a session meeting it was decided that all old books in the cupboards be discarded to make way for "more important" and more recent documents of the church.⁸³

The general indifference of many ministers toward preserving the historical memory of the church is distressing. Catechists and church administrators had a better idea than they of what old books were stored, sometimes in a disordered heap, in disused and dusty cupboards. No association seems to be made between these documents and the memory of the church or the history of Christianity in Ghana. Often the only well-preserved documents are the church anniversary brochures that contain general histories of the individual congregations and various groups within them. Apart from a listing of ministers who have served in the congregations, very few anniversary brochures present the biographies of the indigenous catechists and teachers who worked so hard to start them.

⁸². My research in Eastern Ghana was on agents of the PCG, and my research findings apply only to the PCG churches I visited.

⁸³. To motivate churches to consider better ways of preserving their archival resources, during my visits I made modest financial donations toward the purchase of insecticide, repair of a lock on a cupboard, or general maintenance of the storage space, depending on what seemed the most urgent need.

Beyond the apparent insensitivity to archival records and their preservation, I was sad to find that in some of the churches the ministers in charge were viewing the old church chronicles for the first time during my research visit. One minister told me he “knew” about the “fat, old, and rotting books” locked away in the wooden cabinet in the session hall, but—though he been in that church for four years—he had absolutely no idea what they contained. All such matters, he said, were left in the hands of the catechist and senior presbyter. His statements confirmed my observation that the catechists frequently know more about the church records than do the ministers. One reason may be that the former are more permanent in the presbyteries and churches than are the ministers, whose term is usually not more than four years at a station.

Conclusion: “People Don’t Know, But Who Will Tell Them?”

One significant legacy of the biographies, annual reports, and records of the various indigenous catechists and teachers is that they paint a vivid picture of their experiences as they fulfilled their calling to make Christ known in their contexts.⁸⁴ We know about their contributions chiefly because they wrote reports and kept journals and diaries as part of their training. Through their accounts and records, we in our own generation are able to retrace the path of the Gospel into the communities where it was first preached. We are inspired and challenged to walk that path ourselves with the same sense of calling, offering lives of service and hearts of gratitude to Christ, just as these Christian ancestors did in their time. The biographies and records of unknown pioneers and unsung heroes such as Philip Kwabi and Daniel Saba allow us to identify our place as members of a larger family of Christians. May these biographies—representative of numerous others like them—serve as reminders of early indigenous Christian contributions, commitment, and service. And may they spur on the current generation of church agents not only to persevere in the circumstances they face, but also inspire them to record their own contribution to the history of Christianity in Ghana.⁸⁵

We can learn from these unsung heroes how to better serve the Gospel

⁸⁴. The subheading quotes an inscription on a house in Kitase, on the Akuapem Ridge in Ghana.

⁸⁵. Although beyond the scope of this chapter, comparison of indigenous evangelistic agency then and now would be well worthwhile. One might, for example, draw parallels and distinctions between the worldview of indigenous Christian workers in nineteenth-century Gold Coast and that of contemporary independent African Christians in mission in present-day Ghana.

in our time, for they are our Christian ancestors and belong to the great “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1). We can recover our declining memory by making them known. If today’s ministers (of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana) are not preserving the precious documents bequeathed to them by their predecessors in the Basel Mission and the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast; if they are not writing new chronicles or keeping diaries and journals; who will know about their contribution in generations to come? What will happen to the memory of the church if its life is not recorded in our time? These questions should be of great concern to historians, researchers, theologians, and Christians in our time.

Accidental Missionary: Called to a Life of Building Bridges for Christ and His Kingdom

An Interview with Dr. Casely Baiden Essamuah,
Secretary, Global Christian Forum

My life has taken twists and turns, all orchestrated by God, sometimes against my active inclination in unanticipated ways to enlarge my vision and use my services on a wider map. Growing up I had a strong sense of where I will be working and serving – Ghana, West Africa – and by a combination of factors, most of my life and my work has been outside Ghana, serving as a bridge-builder between the Global North and Global South, between academy and church, between mainline Protestants and evangelicals and now in a real sense on an even larger ecclesiastical map. In retrospect, what might have looked to me like accidents of history, are now recognized as God writing straight with what seemed crooked lines to me.

Can you share something of your family background, childhood, church, education?

I am a 4th generation church worker. I am the last son of the late Most Reverend Samuel B. Essamuah, [1916-1987], the fifth President of Conference [Presiding Bishop, 1979-1984] of the Methodist Church, Ghana. My mother Ernestina Aba Oduguamba Essamuah, [1926-2012], was a leader in the Women’s ministry of the Church. My paternal grandfather was a catechist and my maternal grandparents and great grandparents were also very active in the church. It was my mother’s grandfather, Thomas B. Crentsil whose golden trowel was used in laying the foundation stone of Wesley Methodist Church at Saltpond, our ancestral home, and one of the earliest Methodist buildings in Ghana as well as Africa. My paternal grandfather, Benjamin Essamuah, was a catechist, and I have the honor of having been bequeathed his concordance – rebound and used by my own father, with my father’s inscription on the first page:

“From Benjamin Essamuah (70 years), 1867-May 31, 1937:
*Poor in this world’s goods, But
Wealthy in the riches of heaven*”

I therefore come from a distinguished lineage of Methodist Church Ghana denominational leaders. Being raised up in the parsonage—called *mission house* or *manse* in Ghana because that is where the original missionaries who

brought the Christian gospel stayed—meant that our days started with family prayer and Bible Study before school. My parents’ ministry - spanning half a century - was known for many remarkable things including my father being an outstanding musician, composer, and the person who ensured the enduring relevance and survival of the local Ghanaian Methodist lyric – *ebibindwom* – when it faced a ban. In fact, the promotion of local gospel music has burgeoned into a great market these days in Africa and can be traced to the legitimacy that people like my father had given to African forms of music in the church. In retrospect, it is obvious that without the public affirmation given to such indigenous forms of music, it would have been extinct in the urban areas, but now thankfully it flourishes even among the Ghanaian Methodist diaspora.

The itinerant nature of my father’s ministry meant that I went to elementary and middle schools in different towns: Agona Nyakrom, Ajumako Bisease, Winneba before I entered the famous Methodist Boys secondary school in Ghana, called Mfantsipim. At Mfantsipim, I was following after my elder brothers, the architect Albert, the late public affairs columnist Colin and the lawyer Ernest. Mfantsipim, established in 1876, boasts of many significant alumni, including the late Kofi Annan, the first Secretary General of the United Nations from sub-Saharan Africa, as well as his mentor Francis L. Bartels, the author of the legendary history of the Methodist Church Ghana, *The Roots of Ghanaian Methodism* (1965).

Where did you grow up, and what were the circumstances of your upbringing?

As indicated earlier, I grew up in the mission house in Ghana. Now we know that there were very many native collaborators, without whose work, their missionary efforts would have been futile. The history of Ghanaian Methodism is interesting in that it is one of the earliest local groups of Christians who requested for Bibles from the United Kingdom and prompted the Wesley Methodist Missionary Society to send not only Bibles, but missionaries to what was then called the Gold Coast, now Ghana.

For us growing up, the Church was the center of life, not only religious, but social and economic. Due to my father’s ministry transfers, we were moving every three to five years, and we went on our long school vacations in different locations. Mfantsipim became a stable institution for us.

Were there individuals (parents, siblings, spouse, relatives, friends, teachers, mentors, role models) who particularly influenced you? What was it about them that made an impact on you?

My parents were the first examples I witnessed living lives of sacrifice, dedication, and commitment. They were sold out to Christ and the cause of His church. Our home was hospitality central: the church/family car serving as an ambulance, family van, or ferrying groups of people to different events. It was available to the whole church for whatever was needed. My parents, with their meager stipend, were extremely generous with their resources and we hosted several needy families, sometimes for months without charging them anything. Even thirty years after my father's passing and twenty years following my mother's, I still come across people in my travels who are extremely grateful for the hospitality that my parents showed to them in their time of need.

I traveled a lot with my Dad - serving as his valet as he was growing old. Now I realize that it is probably the best education I ever had. The close association with my Dad meant sitting in countless meetings, experiencing various encounters with different strata of society and also a front row seat at numerous ministry gatherings. In retrospect, that was the best mentorship that I ever had in my life.

When my father became the Presiding Bishop with a church membership of half a million, and a professional clergy strength of about 500 men and women, the scope of his responsibilities was widened and enlarged. Everything that had been done on the local or regional level took on a different heightened national and even sometimes international dimension. Bishops, lay leaders, missionaries, and visiting dignitaries frequented our home.

Being the last son of my parents also meant that each of my siblings had a formal or informal role to play in my upbringing. My eldest brother, Bliss, taught me in Class One. My eldest sister, Eva, helped me with my studies when I was a student at Mfantsipim and she was at Ola Training College, (a nearby school). From my brothers Johann, Albert, the late Colin, Ernest and my younger sister Ernestina, I have learned a lot in terms of life, and ministry experience. Fanny Baaba, is technically a niece, being the daughter of my eldest sister, Eva, but the fact that she is less than ten years younger than me, and we grew up in the same household, makes her count more among my siblings too, than the nephews and nieces – all from whom I have also learned a lot.

Were there events, circumstances or books that were somehow pivotal in your life?

Our family life drastically changed when my father became the Presiding Bishop. Prior to that he had gone to Singapore for a leadership course hosted by John Haggai Ministries, and it was from Singapore that he mailed me a postcard simply stating that God has no grandchildren, and that I needed to decide myself whom I would serve and not think that because I am a son of the manse, I was already a Christian.

With that encouragement I went down to the altar, the next time there was an altar call at our Scripture Union gatherings at Mfantshipim, and made the faith my own. It was as John Wesley intimated: “exchanging the life of a servant for that of a son.” With my conversion experience came the realization that I was a sinner in need of God’s grace, and that I could never please God in my own strength unless aided by Him. It was also a time of sensing a vocational calling – to give my life in the service of the church of Jesus Christ. That conversion experience and its resultant vocational calling continues to be worked out in my life on a continuous basis.

Immediately following after the public confession of faith, some friends of ours who had come to faith at the same time banded together in a Small Group – some of them are Frank Bedu-Addo [now CEO of a pharmaceutical research company], Isaac Daniel Riverson [Senior Finance Manager, Southwark Council, UK] Morgan Asiedu [recently retired Group Counsel and executive director, ECOBANK], Bernhard Teye-Borchway [Suffolk College Sports Professor, UK], Samuel Benin [Africa Regional Director, International Food Policy Research Institute], and Samuel Kutsoati (who sadly passed away early in life). A few others joined in every now and then, but these were the compatriots who formed my Christian life as a teenager. We held each other accountable by daily reading of the Bible and prayer, and by weekly memorization of a verse. Our motto was: *Bible before breakfast, or no Bible, no Breakfast*. Today the world would call us fanatics, but I guess that is what John Wesley and his Oxford Club were up to too. At the University, I joined the Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES - the Ghana branch of InterVarsity).

What was remarkable about my Christian upbringing was that we held together evangelism and what is called the social gospel in the same breath. There was no separation of our core evangelical beliefs and the pursuit of gospel justice. And so, at Mfantshipim I was protocol Prefect, in charge of all the events of social graces -other than Entertainment and Sports - and basically the secretary to the Prefects Council. Later on, after a riot where some of the Prefects were implicated as having instigated it, I was promoted to be the Deputy Head Prefect serving alongside Frank Bedu-Addo as Head Prefect.

At the University of Ghana, Legon, my public service beyond the church saw me also as Secretary to the Students Representative Council, (SRC) serving alongside my friends Kwasi Ofori-Yeboah, SRC President [Professor of Political Science, Southwest Baptist Univ, Bolivar, MO, USA]; Mrs. Francesca Opoku, nee Oppong, [CEO, Solution Oasis Ltd, Ghana] who was the National Treasurer of the National Union Ghana Students (NUGS) Treasurer, and Francis Kofi Adams [formerly Professor of Drexel University], NUGS President. Since I lived in Sarbah Hall, my immediate public colleague was Lawrence Mefful. He was my friend from Mfantsipim days and Sarbah Junior Common Room (JCR) President. Lawrence was later tragically killed in Afghanistan, serving with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in 2009.

I also served as Secretary to Ghana's Student Christian Movement, (SCM) and through that worked with some exemplary leaders across denominations – including then Fr Daniel Allotey, who later became the Anglican Bishop of Cape Coast; and now Canon Kofi DeGraft-Johnson, who is the newly appointed General Secretary for Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPP). It was through my work with the SCM, that I, and several others from Ghana, participated in the All Africa Youth Congress that brought together thousands of young people to Nsele, Kinshasa-Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo. My exposure to the African continent started at that time, and I received an invitation to attend a two-week course on leadership development in Nairobi. As it turned out, without internet and email at that time, I received the telegram of invitation late, and by the time I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, the course had only two days to end. I was therefore asked by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Secretary for Africa, the Rev Kangwa Mabuluki, to stay for three months and participate in other courses until one of the Leadership Development courses was re-taught early in December 1991. During my three-month stay at Mfungamano House, I participated in two-week courses with a cross-section of church leaders from Africa on issues such as Women and Ministry in the Church, the Church and Community Development as well as the Church and Ecumenism. I also had the opportunity to lead devotions at the continental offices of the All Africa Conference of Churches, (AACC) and deepened my appreciation for the churches in Africa as a whole. This course was a formative event in my life.

Influence from Mentors and Books

Growing up in Ghana, we were all greatly influenced by the writings of the English evangelical leader, Dr. John Stott. Others such as Billy Graham, Bill

Bright, J. I. Packer, Oswald Smith, Charles Swindoll, and Josh McDowell impacted us through their ministry and teaching.

In my undergraduate days at the University of Ghana, I studied with Professor Kwesi A. Dickson, who supervised my B.A. degree essay. Others were Dr. Elizabeth Amoah, the first woman faculty member at the Department for the Study of Religions, who taught us phenomenology of religion, and other subjects and Prof. Joshua Kudadjie, (who also later became a minister of the Methodist Church, Ghana and Vice-President of the Methodist University College, Ghana), taught us Ethics and Philosophy of Religion.

At the Trinity College, 1987-88, [now Trinity Theological Seminary], my Principal (then designation) was Dr. Samuel Asante-Antwi, and I was taught by both he and Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah. Both later became Presiding Bishops of the Methodist Church Ghana. Others such as Prof. Emmanuel Larrey [now of Emory University] and Bishop Kwaku Asamoah-Okyerere, [now retired as former Administrative Bishop] were also instrumental in laying the foundations of my vocational ministry. Going to an ecumenical seminary means that I do personally know almost all the current leaders of the mainline Protestant churches in Ghana.

Since I have now spent half of my life living in, and working from the United States, I have also been impacted by several American scholars and authors—too many to mention here. Among these, Prof. Harvey Cox supervised my master's thesis at the Divinity School of Harvard University (graduated 1995) and Prof. Dana Robert supervised my Th.D. dissertation at the Boston University School of Theology (graduated 2003).

What were some of the greatest challenges/obstacles that you encountered in becoming who you are?

My work with Ghana Student Christian Movement brought me into contact with several other people in Ghana, including Victor Hackman and Nana Sam Parry, who were running an organization that sent Ghanaian young men and women to stay for a year in European countries. When I was sent to Belgium from 1983 to 1984, it was one of the most formative aspects of my upbringing as far as living outside Ghana is concerned. For the first time in my life, I discovered that I was Black. I had known myself as an African but having stayed in Black-majority environments, it was something that no one called attention to. But here in Europe, my Blackness was as glaringly obvious as anything – I stuck out like a sore thumb, and had to contend with being treated differently, as the other, and sometimes in a racially denigrating manner. For better and for

worse. I experienced alienation and hostility from people who hardly knew me, while at the same time I was tremendously loved by the Van Lysebbetens family of Sleidinge, and also the Janssens of Gent, who were my host families. I have since had the particular joy of hosting all these Belgian families at our home in the United States.

Additionally, I also experienced the state of European Christianity and the dark empty churches in cities and especially in the rural areas. The challenge for me was how to sustain my Christian faith in an environment which was predominantly secular and sometimes downright hostile to faith, especially when no one knew me or my last name.

Later on, when I was a student and an immigrant in the U.S.A., these issues came to me in an even more blatant way. My life and ministry in the U.S.A. have been with predominantly white churches as they sought to engage in global missions. I have worked as minister of missions at Park Street Church, Boston, Massachusetts from 1998 to 2005, as Global Missions pastor at Bay Area Community Church from 2005 to 2018, and now as Secretary of the Global Christian Forum since July 2018. In addition to serving on the Alumni Council of Harvard Divinity School, I have served on the board of the Overseas Ministries Study Center and also as Board Secretary to World Relief – the development and relief organization of the National Association of Evangelicals.

What do you feel were your most significant accomplishments? Can you describe the major milestones in your years of ministry?

Educationally, my graduate studies in the U.S.A. were quite formative. At Harvard, I studied with Harvey Cox and others. Through the Boston Theological Institute, I took courses from almost all the theological schools and seminaries in the greater Boston area, including Boston University School of Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Boston College, Andover Newton Theological School and Episcopal Divinity School – the last two schools now defunct.

It was through the Boston Theological Institute, headed by Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, where I also served as Student Coordinator for Missions and Ecumenism, that I had my most extensive exposure to formal ecumenism. Courses offered included study trips to the Vatican, the Geneva offices of the World Council of Churches, the Bossey Ecumenical Studies Institute, India and Ghana. The follow-up trips brought the key players in the then ecumenical movement into closer review, with meetings with the Pope – Saint Pope John

Paul 2, and the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew, as well as Dr. Konrad Kaiser, then General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

I studied at Boston University School of Theology, with Prof. Dana L. Robert. Prof. Robert's classes determined the course of my career afterwards. In addition to the relevance of the course contents, the classes seemed to be filled with a microcosm of world Christianity.

It was Prof. Robert who invited me to a conference in Pretoria, South Africa in 1997. I was serving as an intern at Park Street Church (PSC) at the time. Upon my return, I gave a report to the church leadership on the work of a PSC couple serving in Cape Town. As a result of the positive reception given to my report, both from leadership and the congregation, I was asked to serve as Minister of Missions at PSC.

Prof. Robert introduced me to the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, and eventually I served on that board. She was also one of the first I consulted when a friend approached me to consider making myself available for the role of Secretary, Global Christian Forum. She patiently answered my questions, calmed my fears, and wrote a generous reference that ensured that the Search Committee—most of whom knew her from her plenary address at the Second Global Christian Forum Global Gathering in Manado, Indonesia, 2011, considered my application seriously.

And so I am very grateful to Prof Dana Robert for these significant introductions and guidance. I consider her husband, Prof. Inus Daneel, also as a mentor, and was pleased to visit with him in Zimbabwe, during better days.

But probably my most significant academic achievement is the publication of my first book *Genuinely Ghanaian: A History of the Methodist Church Ghana, 1961-2000* (Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ: 2010), based on my ThD dissertation work. I am particularly grateful to God for the grace to research a field that is in many ways, part of my own story too. It has been widely and positively received and is a recommended text not only in seminaries in Ghana, but for all who answer the call to become vocational Methodist ministers, in Ghana and among the Ghanaian Diaspora.

Ministry in the USA. At both Park Street Church and Bay Area Community Church, I was either the first non-white or Black employee, and in senior leadership as such. I hope that my colleagues would testify that my presence on leadership brought them closer to issues of the global South. Every institution or organization that purports to reflect Christ ought to strive in embracing multiculturalism – if not for its own sake and the benefits it brings, then at least for the sake of the witness we bear, and in anticipation of heaven, which is the most diverse place that we will all inhabit.

It was also at Park Street Church that I met my dear wife, Angela Wakhweya, a medical doctor from Uganda, and a public health professional. We are blessed with three children, Zinhle, Zikomo and Zachary, all born in Boston. It was during the tenure, and last years of Dr. David C. Fisher that I was an intern at Park Street Church, and I also worked closely with Rev. Joseph Sabounji, the Minister to Internationals. As a church with over 50 nations represented, every Sunday, Park Street Church, was indeed a mini “United Nations.”

Later on, at Park Street Church, under the leadership of Dr. Gordon P. Hugenberger, senior pastor, [1997-2007] and Missions board leaders David W. Rix and Robert Bradley, I was at the forefront of implementing what we called the “full support funding system for missionaries” which was a radical departure from past church practice and therefore criticized by some. This was basically to establish closer relationships with fewer missionaries, instead of having superficial transactional relationships with a lot of missionaries whom very few people knew or prayed for. We also instituted a Missionary Prayer Minute at every church service where a properly trained person would lead in prayer for one of the missionaries. The full support system also ensured that each missionary had a Prayer and Advisory team, called Barnabas Group, whose sole aim was to pray and love only one particular missionary.

During my time of service at Park Street Church, we also made substantial investment in the outreach to foreign students and immigrants in Boston, offering discounted English-As-Second-Language courses, and generously supporting CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and InterVarsity for their various ministries in Boston-area campuses.

Internationally, we invested a huge percentage of our missions’ budget: College Student Evangelism in Kiev, Ukraine; and Youth and Student Discipleship in Ghana, West Africa; and street children ministry in Bolivia. For a period of about 2-3 years by investing in these programs, giving and initiatives, we spent over one million dollars in addition to the one and half million-dollar annual missions budget.

In 2005, I was appointed Compassionate Outreach Pastor (Global Missions) for Bay Area Community Church, an evangelical church, in Annapolis, MD. Some of the highlights of our service include mobilizing 10% of the congregation at that time to go on a missions’ trip in one year, 2015. In addition to continuing the partnership with missions in Ghana, and Uganda, we maintained ties with pastors and churches in South Sudan and Hyderabad, South India. These two significant partnerships – South Sudan and India – absorbed more than 50% of our missions’ budget. Either we hosted or visited these two partners every eighteen months or so.

In my global missions' service in both churches, I facilitated short term missions experience for over one thousand Americans, over the period of twenty years, and invested millions of dollars in missions overseas. The areas of our global missions' involvement overall were very wide, encompassing Bible Translation; medical missions; youth evangelism; HIV-AIDS orphans and widows support; street-children, and advanced theological education. These were led by missionaries sent by our churches who naturally returned every 3-4 years on an annual furlough, according to the policy of their agency.

As the global south was already the center of gravity for Christianity as demographics shifted, my family and I intentionally ensured that these predominantly white congregations heard African, Asian, and Latin American Christian leaders preach and teach the Bible as part of a two-way partnership. The result was to shift the perception that these areas in the global South are not only to be seen as objects of compassion but respected as agents of mission.

Whenever our senior pastor at Bay Area Community Church (BACC), Greg St Cyr, introduced our family, he would say, "When God brought Casely to us, he also brought Ghana to us; when God brought Angela to us, he also brought Uganda to us." Given my wife's background and passion to effect positive change among her people in the Manafwa district of Mbale, Uganda, the churches we have been a part of have sent short term missionaries and considerable resources to Uganda to come alongside those ministries.

During my service in global missions at both PSC and BACC, I introduced the leadership to the leading student evangelism and discipleship ministry in Ghana – Scripture Union. Led by legendary leaders Jude Hama 1990-2010 and later Kwame Adu, 2010-2020, and now under the board chairmanship of my Mfantsipim Bible Small Group mate, Morgan Asiedu, they have hosted several teams from both churches. The Scripture Union ministry in Ghana reaches over 90% of the senior and junior secondary schools, and is still an open door that offers Christian exposure, daily Bible habits and prayer to teenagers all over the country. Over 200 members of my two churches and other faith communities have visited Ghana on short term mission trips. We also invested generously in the Scripture Union camp and national conferences ministries. On these trips, many Americans witnessed the challenges Christians in the Global South face every day and experienced the vitality of their faith.

Through my service as Global Missions Pastor at BACC, I was also able to direct support to my mother church, the Methodist Church, Ghana, especially through its evangelistic and educational ministries. Park Street Church was one of the first donors when the idea of the Methodist University College of Ghana was initially launched.

During 2009-2018, I served the St Paul's Ghana Methodist Church, Baltimore as resident minister. One of the smallest churches in the mission, it is also filled with some of the most dedicated members, as several have served on the national level. Serving in Baltimore offered the opportunity to deepen my ties with ties with the Methodist Church Ghana in a direct way. My work in Baltimore with Ghanaian Methodists served as a valuable precursor to my role in offering leadership to the entire mission diocese, (NAMD).

For a period of about five years, I offered executive leadership to Methodist Churches in the USA and Canada, made up predominantly of Ghanaian immigrants in the North America Mission Diocese (NAMD). Almost fifty churches in number with half under the Ghana Constitution, and the other half under the United Methodist Church, I served as Synod Secretary overseeing the ecclesiastical life of all these congregations -- sometimes with a resident bishop in the USA, and sometimes without. This, mostly voluntary work, was a source of great joy, as the various congregations sought to reach out beyond the Ghanaian immigrant bubble and incorporate others.

Additionally, in 2014/2015, under the leadership of Steve Moore, I served on a part-time basis Missio Nexus, an organization whose vision is to see missional leaders accelerating the fulfillment of the Great Commission in servant partnership with the church globally. As the Church Advancement Director, I coordinated conferences on the topics of Church and Immigration in four cities in the USA: Baltimore, Atlanta, Chicago Los Angeles, and Toronto, Canada and facilitated several workshops at their national conferences. I also facilitated an online book club and monthly discussion for global mission pastors.

In my life, I have received a number of scholarships and awards for my university education in Ghana and in the U.S.A. as well as a Pastors' Sabbatical Grant from the Lilly Foundation.

Can you tell us about your work for Global Christian Forum (GCF) and your vision going forward?

Established almost twenty-three years ago, the Guiding Purpose Statement, states that GCF exists "To create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organizations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges."

The GCF was initiated by, but remains independent from, the World Council of Churches as a **forum** where evangelical and Pentecostal churches can engage with mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics at a common table. GCF

is structured with four pillars who have equal status at the table, namely the Pentecostal World Federation – (PWF), the World Evangelical Alliance – (WEA), the Roman Catholic Church through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – (PCPCU), and the World Council of Churches - WCC. It doesn't see itself as an institution or organization but is instead a networking space without a prescribed agenda. GCF is complementary to all the others, not an alternative. GCF's uniqueness is in who it is able to bring to this table, and it keeps asking: *Who else needs to be at the table?* It operates with a 50/50 principle to ensure that the evangelical and Pentecostal (50%) who are usually not conversant with ecumenical ventures are fairly represented at the table as are the Catholics and WCC (50%).

GCF has convened three Global Gatherings: Limuru, Kenya, 2007; Manado, Indonesia, 2011; and finally, Bogota, Colombia, 2018 where I was also installed as Secretary. My predecessors Hubert van Beek (Netherlands) and Larry Miller (USA/France) primarily came from the WCC family and I am the first non-white, and Methodist/evangelical who also comes from the Global South. Incidentally, and on a lighter note, both of my predecessors' birthdays are July 1. Mine is not.

The role of the Secretary, (as opposed to a "General Secretary") reflects the ethos of GCF. GCF does not have a President/CEO, but instead a servant leader whose strength is not drawn from "taking control" but letting go of personal agendas, and instead listening carefully to the fears, dreams, and hopes of others, and facilitating conversations as the group strives for consensus and common purpose.

My role therefore, as a bridge builder between Global South and Global North, is even more significant given the demographic and numerical shift of the Christian faith to the Global South, and the continuing economic ascendancy of the church based in the global North.

The following are some of the questions that I grapple with:

1. How do westerners whose Christianity is based primarily on rationalistic interpretations co-exist peacefully with Global South Christians whose Christian pilgrimage is more experiential?
2. How can churches that are growing rapidly in the global South and among immigrants in the global North meaningfully engage churches in the global North, some of whom are in decline and yet hold a lot of church history, global engagement, and financial resources?
3. What is the next step in ecumenism that GCF is suitably positioned to provide?

Since this is a forum, the servant and executive leadership I provide is in concert with a six-member executive, and a thirty-member international committee.

Personally, I see that in a very interesting way, my role as Global Missions Pastor for twenty years in large U.S. churches while serving the Global South was a great preparation for this role. I function as a bridge-builder or an orchestra conductor, ensuring that all the parts function to the best of their ability. I am motivated by John 17:21—“that all may be one that the world may believe”—and especially the end that says that our unity brings credibility to our witness. Each church is incomplete without the other parts of the body of Christ, especially in light of our future in heaven, which is the most diverse representation of humanity, all united by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 5:9-10). Other Scriptural passages such as Eph. 4:1-6 stress the imperative to keep “the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” I Corinthians 12:12-30 captures in graphic detail, the incomprehensibility of any part of the body conceiving of itself as independent from other parts of the body.

I have heard that some have said we are living in “an ecumenical wintertime” and I can understand that feeling. Again, with the shift in the center of gravity of Christianity from the Global North to the Majority World, we have the responsibility to ensure that a veritable Springtime follows this winter. The Christian community in the Global South has a lot to offer and have very mature resource persons who can lead us in a global revival where the Church acts out its mission and mandate from Christ with confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is always a lot to be done, and we cannot just rest on our oars when our churches are full. Others need to hear the gospel message, and desperately so. It has been said that the Great Commission—whether it is Matthew 28:18-20 or Acts 1:8—is too BIG for any one church, or denomination to do it alone. Yet it is too important for us not to try to do so with others. The issues at stake are higher and greater than any one church. We will do well to always remember that the sum is better than the whole of the parts.

What are your concerns for Africa (or for your church, your country) as you contemplate the future?

Africa, since 2018, is the continent with the most Christians in the world today. That gives cause for celebration as well as grateful reflection. We can always be grateful for all who sacrificed to make this continent what it is now, as we ask ourselves: What is our responsibility today? In many respects, Christianity in

Africa, is more experiential than rationalistic, and the ecumenical/evangelical divide is not as sharply differentiated as in the West. Most churches will be engaged with equal fervor in issues of social justice as well as missions and evangelism. What can the rest of the world learn from African Christianity?

And to my African church leaders, as we grow and multiply membership and ministries, please do not forget to be outwardly focused. As someone said, the church exists for those who are yet to receive the love of Christ.

From my standpoint, the greatest distinction in global Christianity is whether the Word of God is true and relevant today or whether only portions of it have to be obeyed. This distinction passes through all Christian denominations and does not fall in our neatly divided sections of conservative/liberal; rather, it cuts and divides both—whether in matters of human sexuality, poverty, healing, or spiritual warfare. How we process these missiologically and theologically depends, to a large extent, on our cultural lens and viewpoints. Ultimately, we all need spiritual discernment and humility as we move forward. Now more than ever, we need each other in order to be whole.

What are your dreams and hopes for the church in Africa? What are some of the challenges the African church faces?

The growth and dynamism of the Christian Church in Africa has come about as a result of a great deal of sacrifice. Whether it is the earliest missionaries, some of whom ventured out, armed only with a one-way ticket, with all their material possessions packed in coffins and caskets – knowing that they would most likely not return to their homelands alive. Or the original pioneers for whom association with the missionaries and acceptance of their message meant alienation from their families and sometimes even ethnic enclaves. I see that same spirit of sacrifice among Christians in South Sudan persecuted for their faith, and those in Nigeria standing strong in the midst of daunting challenges. The Church in Africa is called to a never-ending journey of discipleship and growth, especially as some other variations of gospel [prosperity is the new syncretism] are capturing the imaginations of the marketplace and the next generation. With most churches in Africa having more than 50% of their active membership under the age of 35 years, the Church is poised to effect a transformational change in the socio-political dynamics of Africa if the current leadership equips and enables youth in leadership.

What are your thoughts on the DACB as a tool for documenting African Christian history, collaboratively, with the input from many different churches?

I consider myself privileged to have known the genesis of this very valuable project and have followed its development with keen interest. In a letter from Jonathan Bonk to me, [then a Professor of Global Christian Studies at the Providence College and Seminary, Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada], dated April 15, 1996, he thanked me for expressing interest in the DACB, and also indicated that without the anticipated major funding for the project, “the Project will be taking a bicycle rather than a limousine to its ultimate destination.” I have followed with keen interest the evolution of the DACB from the Overseas Ministries Study Center to Boston University.

Digitizing stories of African Christian leaders and making it accessible to all will ultimately fill a glaring lacuna in African Christian historiography. Prof. Andrew Walls recalls a similar project – collecting all the various documents, copies of baptismal roles, marriage registers, preaching journals and such from several churches in southern Nigeria, that were then sadly destroyed in the Biafra War. By digitizing these stories, the DACB ensures their availability in spite of the vagaries of time and circumstance.

Do you have words of advice for readers of the JACB?

Everyone who reads these stories also has a story to tell. No matter how short our Christian pilgrimage or tangential we may think it to be, we all have a story to contribute. If all who read the DACB contributed one story – either their own or of someone whom they deem significant in their denomination, church, nation or region, the African Church will be duly enriched.

Anything else you would like to add?

Finally, I am very grateful that you gave me the opportunity to write these answers. They have helped me to acknowledge my indebtedness to so many people in my educational and professional career. If we stand where we are today, it is because we do so on the shoulders of others who have carried us all along in their hearts and prayers and I am grateful.

Indeed, to God be the glory – as His ways are immeasurably better than ours. The accidents of history in my life have all been orchestrated for His purposes alone.

Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restrick, Head, BU African Studies Library

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena; Todd M Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross. **Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa**. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2020. \$39.95 pbk.

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) ISBN-10 : 1683072863 ISBN-13 : 978-1683072867

Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa is a comprehensive reference volume that covers key facts and analyses on every country in Sub-Saharan Africa, offering reliable demographic information and original interpretative essays by indigenous scholars and practitioners. It maps patterns of growth and decline, assesses major traditions and movements, analyzes key themes, and examines current trends. This is the paperback version of volume 1, of a 10-volume series, and it is ideal for anyone studying African Christianity. It includes essays examining each of the major Christian traditions (Anglicans, Independents, Orthodox, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Pentecostals/Charismatics), as well as key themes such as faith and culture, worship and spirituality, theology, social and political engagement, mission and evangelism, religious freedom, interfaith relations, slavery, anthropology of evil, and migration. Key points and features: A handy reference book and affordable paperback that explores Christianity in every country in Sub-Saharan Africa, with clearly presented statistical and demographic information. Analyses of leading features and current trends are written by indigenous scholars. Includes essays exploring key themes such as worship and spirituality, social and political engagement, slavery, theology, and more. The standard handbook on African Christianity. ([Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

Open Access – Journal Articles & Theses.

Akunda, Athanasius Amos M. **Orthodox Christian dialogue with Banyore culture**. Th.D. Missiology Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria. 2010. URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/6428>

Abstract: Orthodox Christianity came to the Banyore people of western Kenya in 1942. The Banyore are Bantu speaking people whose language belongs to the Luhya group of languages. The Banyore live near the Uganda border; they are thought to be related to the famous Uganda Kingdom of Bunyoro Kitara. The first Christian missionaries among the Banyore were Protestants who came from South Africa in 1905. The Orthodox faith reached Bunyore in 1942,

through a Kenyan missionary from central Kenya, Bishop George (Arthur) Gathuna, and Fr Obadiah from Uganda. The point of note here is that the first Orthodox Christian missionaries to introduce the Orthodox Christian faith to the Banyore people were Kenyans. I shall examine the relation between Orthodox Christianity and Banyore culture, and show how Orthodox Christianity, in dialogue with the Banyore people, became indigenized in Bunyore culture. Thus Orthodox Christians in Bunyore do not see Orthodoxy as something foreign, but as something that has become part of their own culture.

Njoroge, J. **Towards African Orthodoxy: The Requirement of Inculturation.** *ORTHODOX*, 56, 2017, pp. 65-85. Retrieved from http://ortodoksi.fi/ojs_3.1/index.php/ortodoksi/article/view/37

“This article will focus on inculturation from an African Orthodox perspective. The main objective is to bring into account, and especially from a missiological point of view, an argument proving the need to have an ‘African Orthodox Church.’ To have an African Orthodox Church means having Orthodox faith imbued within the African worldview and lifestyle. In order to achieve this, this article attests to the inculturation of Orthodox faith as it grows and spreads in sub-Saharan Africa.” (Excerpt from the Introduction)

White, Peter. **Centenary of Pentecostalism in Ghana (1917-2017): A case study of Christ Apostolic Church International.** *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, vol. 75 no. 4, 2019.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5185>

Abstract: Centenary celebrations in every organization are approached with joy and reflection of the past, present, impact on society and planning for the years ahead. The Christ Apostolic Church International (CACI), which is acknowledged by Ghanaian Pentecostals as the mother of Pentecostalism, celebrated its Centenary of Pentecostalism in 2017. Having come this far and being acknowledged as the pioneer of classical Pentecostalism in Ghana, it is very important that issues concerning the church, its leadership and impact on society are discussed and properly recorded for future reference. Although some Ghanaian Pentecostal scholars did their best to document some aspects of history of CACI, their focus was limited to the early history of the church and the ministry of Apostle Peter Newman Anim. This article contributes to the existing missional and historical literature on CACI by bringing on board some of the historical gaps. This article also discusses the miraculous dispensation in CACI, their leadership and administrative structure, their growth and challenges as well as their religio-social and economic impact in Ghana.