

# JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

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The *Journal of African Christian Biography* was launched in 2016 to complement and make stories from the on-line *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* ([www.DACB.org](http://www.DACB.org)) more readily accessible and immediately useful in African congregations and classrooms.

Now published quarterly, with all issues available on line, 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* plans to include interviews with select living African church leaders and academics.

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This work “[will] focus on four areas of Christology where we feel African authors have contributed new, interesting perspectives. In the first section, an attempt will be made to identify those elements that enrich our understanding of Jesus' divine Person, immersed in Trinitarian life. We shall also investigate whether this picture has an impact on African Christians' way of practicing ecclesial communion. African Christology also opens interesting ecclesiological perspectives. In the second section, we will examine the peculiar African notion of Christ's mystical Body. The third section focuses on the soteriological perspectives suggested by African Christologists. Africans not only care for the soul but also for the body. The African concept of life deeply affects the view of Christ's saving function. (Attempts to understand Christ from what he does rather than who he is have become dominant in recent years, particularly with the emergence of the theologies of liberation. We must take them into consideration.) The last section focuses on the pastoral perspectives opened by African Christology.” (See [p.31](#))

([www.dacb.org](http://www.dacb.org)); “Living Stones in Africa” (3 volumes, 1996-2006); and in “Africa Nazarene Mosaic: Inspiring Accounts of Living Faith” (2001).

Additional materials relate to the life and ministry of Paul Stanley and Margaret Lillian Stark Dayhoff. Materials include published works, manuscripts, and photographs in digital and print formats. The collection also contains items published by Irwin E. Dayhoff. (From the [“Scope and Contents”](#))

Lang, Michael Kpughe. **“Christian Churches and National Integration in Cameroon since Reunification: A Historical Survey.”** *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*. Vol. 3, Iss. 2, 2017, pp.27-38. ISSN 2454-7646 (Print) & ISSN 2454-7654 (Online). DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-7654.0302003>, [www.arcjournals.org](http://www.arcjournals.org)

**Abstract:** The reunification of Cameroon in 1961 heightened the need to forge a sense of national accommodation and common citizenship. The country’s multi-ethnic make up and its disparate colonial heritages (British and French) pose insuperable impediments to viable nationhood. Worse still, the country’s unity is marred by religious cleavages and differences (Muslim north vs. southern Christian; Muslim vs. animist; Christian vs. animist, etc.). Indeed, religious cleavages and differences were threats to the integrative process of the country. These differences were also reflected in the parochial and regional character of Christian churches (Catholics and Protestants) resulting from the ecclesiastical colonial mold. Thus, there was need for practical and effective methods aimed at bridging denominational gaps and differences in view of fostering national unity. This paper examines the contributions of Catholic and Protestant churches to the process of national integration in Cameroon from different perspectives: institutional-structural, ecumenical, and evangelical. It sustains the argument that churches did not only foster national unity, but were equally affected by it. The paper concludes that the churches’ structures, ecumenical bodies and evangelical initiatives, in spite of some pitfalls, transcend the multi-ethnic differences and the dual colonial heritages, coinciding with the boundaries of the nation state. ([Article](#))

Nwuzor, Dominic Ndubuisi. **A survey of African Christology.** Universidad de Navarra, Facultad de Teología. Extract from Doctoral Thesis presented to the Facultad de Teología at the Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona. 1997. <https://dadun.unav.edu/handle/10171/11331>

(An excerpt from p. 31, “African Christological Perspectives”)

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## Introducing a “Writing Theologian” and an Oral Theologian

This issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography* celebrates the memory of two theologians who devoted their lives to very different kinds of theology. Professor Charles Nyamiti was a “writing theologian” (to use an expression coined by Kwame Bediako) who worked within the halls of academia, having been trained in European institutions of higher learning. His pioneering work on inculturated African Christian theology and Christology was published in dozens of journals. Through his teaching, he shaped the lives of many young scholars, both African and Western. In the end, his widespread influence carved out a space for African Christian theology in the global academic community.

Madam Afua Kuma’s oral theology, on the other hand, flowed from her direct experience of her Savior Jesus and the daily work of faith as she struggled against principalities and powers, prayed, healed people, gave freely of her time and resources, and offered her public praises wherever she went. Although she had received no formal schooling, she astounded listeners with her masterful adaptation of Akan traditional praises out of which emerged a new expression of Christian worship—extemporaneous praises to Jesus that exhibited exceptional theological, cultural, and linguistic inventiveness. Nicknamed by her family “Afua Kuma Yaa Asantewaa” after the great Asante warrior queen, this spiritual warrior and woman of wisdom left an indelible legacy among her people. Now, thanks to the work of Fr. Jon Kirby and Joseph Kwakye, two volumes of her original praises in Twi have been translated into English.

Readers will also enjoy interviews with two living ancestors of African Christianity. Dr. Emmanuel Evans-Anfom is a renowned surgeon and educational leader in Ghana. Cardinal Christian W. Tumi is archbishop emeritus of Douala, Cameroon. The issue closes with a brief biography of missionary-turned-historian Paul Dayhoff whose tireless efforts help to document the lives of over two hundred Nazarene Christians in Africa.

**Michèle Miller Sigg**  
Managing Editor

Evans-Anfom was one of the leading surgeons of the country and a renowned educationalist. ([Google Books](#))

Vähäkangas, Mika. *In Search of Foundations for African Catholicism: Charles Nyamiti's Theological Methodology* (Studies in Christian Mission) Brill Publishers, 1999; Hardcover \$151.07 ([Amazon.com](#)) ISBN-13: 978-9004113282 ISBN-10: 9004113282

**Description:** This study deals with the interaction between neo-Thomism and African traditional thinking in Charles Nyamiti's theological methodology. The approach of the study is groundbreaking as it is the first monograph published on the theological method of any African theologian. The question about the position and relevance of Western philosophical-theological systems in a non-Western context also has a wider relevance concerning contextual theologies in general. Nyamiti's theology is a germane and fruitful choice for the study of this issue because of his programmatic attempt to build a coherent African Roman Catholic theological system. His theology is also well-known for its strong African flavor in elaborating theological questions within the framework of orthodox Roman Catholic doctrine. ([Amazon.com](#))

## Open Access – Miscellaneous

Fuller Seminary Archives and Special Collections, "**COLLECTION 0016: Papers of Paul S. Dayhoff, 1925-2009**" (2018). List of Archival Collections. 34. <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/findingaids/34>

**Description:** Finding Aid to the physical collections (12 boxes, 7 linear feet) of Paul S. Dayhoff held at the Fuller Seminary Archives. The guide includes a brief biography of Paul and his father Irwin, the scope and contents of the collection (see below) and a general inventory guide to each box's contents:

The collection comprises Paul Dayhoff's three published works and related notes; Africa Church of the Nazarene Annual Assembly reports; individual Church papers, and periodicals published by the Nazarene Church. Photograph subjects include the African Nazarenes documented in Dayhoff's biographical works. Compact discs contain pictures of the fauna and flora of Africa, Nazarene ministry in Africa, and the Dayhoffs' family history. The audio cassettes contain interviews conducted for the books' publications.

The collection contains data on 475 persons, mostly African nationals, who have been crucial to the development of the church in Africa. Published data includes the “Dictionary of African Biography”

## Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restricks, Head, BU African Studies Library

Aye-Addo, Charles Sarpong. *Akan Christology: An Analysis of the Christologies of John Samuel Pobee and Kwame Bediako in Conversation with the Theology of Karl Barth* (African Christian Studies; Book 5). Pickwick Publications 2013. \$20.00 pbk. ([Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1620321556)) ISBN-10: 1620321556; ISBN-13: 978-1620321553

**Description:** As Christianity expands and grows in Africa, there is deep new interest in African theology in general and the way in which some African theologians are interpreting the significance of Christ within African culture, in particular. This volume explores the Christology of two of the foremost African thinkers against the background of the West African Akan culture. The result is a rare and fascinating look at some of the key cultural symbols of African culture, the struggle to reinterpret the “white, blond, blue-eyed Christ” presented by pioneering missionaries to Africa, and the pitfalls and promises that attend the exercise. The selected theologians, John Samuel Pobee and Kwame Bediako, are put into a critical conversation with Karl Barth in order to initiate a dialogue between Western theology and African theology that brings to the fore some of the pertinent issues about the particularity and universality of Christ. The volume, while seeking to make Christ relevant for Africa, moves away from romanticizing African culture and insists on being faithful to the biblical witness to Christ. The result is an attempt to present an engaging piece of work that makes a significant contribution to contemporary debates on Christology and indigenous theology. ([Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1620321556))

Evans-Anfom, Emmanuel. *To the Thirsty Land: Autobiography of a Patriot*. Africa Christian Press, 2003. \$16.00 ([Abebooks.com](https://www.abebooks.com)) ISBN 10: 996487717X / ISBN 13: 9789964877170

**Description:** Emmanuel Evans-Anfom is considered a living legend in Ghana. He was one of the great pioneers of the medical profession in that country, as well as serving as Vice Chancellor for the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. His memoirs span his lifetime from the end of colonial rule through four and a half decades of independent Ghana. They tell the story of his early upbringing in James Town, the seminal impact of Achimota College on his education and career, and his medical training at Edinburgh University in wartime Britain. At the peak of his professional career,

## Tribute: Legendary Pioneer African Theologian Charles Nyamiti

By Francis Anekwe Oborji

We begin this tribute in honor of Rev. Prof. Fr. Charles Nyamiti with the following obituary announcement. Originally written in Swahili, the obituary was published on the website homepage of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya, on May 20, 2020, a day after Nyamiti's demise in his country home of Tanzania.

His Excellency Paul Ruzoka of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tabora is announcing the death of Father Charles Nyamiti on May 19, 2020, at 5:00 am at the hospital of St. Anna, Ipili – Tabora. The funeral of our Grandfather Professor Fr. Charles Nyamiti is expected to take place on Thursday, May 21, 2020, at 10:00 am at the cemetery of the Archdiocese in Itaga. Information may reach to the Priesthood Community in Tabora and wherever they are, to Religious, relatives and all friends wherever they are.<sup>1</sup>

Nyamiti had spent most of his career as university professor and scholar at CUEA in Nairobi from 1983 to 2019. He then returned to his home archdiocese of Tabora, where he died on May 19, 2020.

Today, Africa mourns Prof. Nyamiti, the vibrant pioneer of inculturated African Christian theology and a founding scholar of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Called to the glory of heaven in the early hours of May 19, 2020, in his country home of Tanzania, the remains of this great pioneer African theologian and first-class scholar were laid to rest on Thursday, May 21, 2020, in his home archdiocese of Tabora after the funeral mass at the cathedral.

His writings were seminal contributions leading to the global recognition of what we call today African Christology and African Christian theology in general. Nyamiti is indisputably a central figure among pioneer African theologians. His writings have helped to restore the dignity of African people and to rehabilitate the long scorned African religious and cultural heritage,

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<sup>1</sup> Signed by Nyamiti's bishop, Archbishop Paul Ruzoka of the Catholic archdiocese of Tabora, Tanzania, the above is our English translation of the obituary announcement.

making it into an indispensable source for authentic African Christian theology among the theological sciences of our time.

Today, it is no longer taboo to discuss or write about African theology and Christology in theological faculties across the globe, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Nyamiti and others of his generation of African theologians. This was something unthinkable until recent times in many universities and faculties of theology in the Western world and elsewhere, including Africa itself, where the local churches are still under the heavy monitoring influence of the mother churches from the Western hemisphere. Furthermore, many students of theology, Africans and non-Africans alike, can freely discuss or write their licentiate and doctoral dissertations on themes of African theology, as well as on the thought of pioneer African theologians. Like many others, I have benefitted from the pioneering work of African scholars of Nyamiti's generation ever since my years as a university student.

### Biographical Note

Charles Nyamiti was born in 1931, one of three brothers and four sisters, to Christian parents, Theophilus Chambi Chambigulu and Helen Nyasolo, who belonged to the Wanyamwezi people of Tanzania. Nyamiti's great interest in blending his Christian faith with an African worldview through theological reflection was a logical result of the cultural socialization his parents gave him growing up surrounded by Wanyamwezi culture and Tanzanian philosophy.

After the usual primary and high school education, Nyamiti studied for the priesthood at the prestigious Kipalapala Major Seminary in Tabora, Tanzania, where he acquired his philosophical and theological formation. At that time, the emphasis in philosophy was Thomistic philosophy, which was to have tremendous influence on him. Much of his published literature depends on the Thomistic methodology of metaphysical and theological investigations and reflections.

Ordained a Catholic priest in 1962, Nyamiti was sent to Louvain University in Belgium from 1963 to 1969, where he graduated with a doctorate in Systematic/Dogmatic Theology and a certificate in Music Theory and Piano. From Louvain, he was sent to Vienna, where he studied Cultural Anthropology and Music Composition, graduating with another doctorate and licentiate respectively.

Nyamiti then returned to Tanzania where he served as a professor at his alma mater, Kipalapala Major Seminary, from 1976-1981. During that time, he also served as a co-worker in some neighboring parishes. In 1983, Nyamiti moved

such as a person's favorite song or small deeds of compassion, he drew personal and inspiring portraits of these early leaders.

Paul died on April 26, 2020, in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

### Sources:

Obituary, Bates Funeral Chapel website.

<https://www.batesfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Paul-Dayhoff/#!/Obituary>. Accessed July 6, 2020.

Cautheon, Hal A. Faculty member, Nazarene Theological College, Muldersdrift, South Africa. Tribute dated April 30, 2020. Bates Funeral Chapel website.

David Allen Hubbard Library, Fuller Theological Seminary. Biography attached to finding aid for Papers of Paul S. Dayhoff, 1925-2009. <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=findingaids>. Accessed July 6, 2020.

Sigg, Michèle. Associate Director, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*. Email correspondence from 2000 to 2015.

This biography, received in 2020, is an adapted and expanded version of the Bates Funeral Chapel obituary from April 2020 by DACB editors, in particular, Morgan Crago, a doctoral student at Boston University School of Theology.

institutions. He spent several years planting church congregations, building churches and parsonages, and, of course, preaching and teaching every chance he got. Most of his work was done in Swaziland and in South Africa, where he helped to found the Nazarene Theological College. In 1980, he earned his ThD degree from the University of South Africa, writing a dissertation entitled “The Message of Holiness of the Church of the Nazarene among the Northern Sotho People.”

Dayhoff was a wonderful husband and father, and he loved to fish and play games with his family. He was an avid reader and a lifelong learner who loved to teach. He loved Africa and the African people and spoke several African languages, including Afrikaans, Zulu, and Pedi.

He and Margaret had four children—Paula, Patricia, Elizabeth, and James—eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild, Aiden Criqui. He was very proud of his family, and his yearly newsletters were full of photos of all three generations. When Margaret died on February 17, 2015, they had been married for over 60 years.

After Dayhoff retired, he began the project of documenting the stories of all the Nazarene missionaries in Africa. Using his many connections from his missionary past, he assembled dozens of biographies in three volumes (unpublished) entitled *Living Stones in Africa: Pioneers of the Church of the Nazarene* (1999), *Africa Nazarene Mosaic: Inspiring Accounts of Living Faith* (2002), and *Standing Stones of Africa: Pillars of the Faith in the Church of the Nazarene* (2004). Some of these stories formed the first body of biographical material for the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (DACB.org) that first went online in 1998. From 2000 until 2014, he maintained regular email correspondence with Michèle Sigg and the staff of the DACB to offer corrections, updates, and new biographies. He continued to add and update biographies and photos of these Nazarene pioneers until at least 2013. Overall, he contributed to the DACB more than two hundred biographies of Nazarenes, both foreign and local missionaries in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Cape Verde, Zambia, and Malawi.

Dayhoff not only worked to preserve the lives of these African pioneers, but also took care to preserve the thoughts of these evangelists and missionaries in their own words. Many of his biographies include quotations from articles the subject had written, including pieces from *Mutwalisi* (or *The Herald*), the Nazarene magazine published in South Africa, or *Africa Calling*, published by the International Holiness Mission. Dayhoff’s storytelling was simple but highlighted the faith and piety of those he described. Through the provision of small details,

to Nairobi to found what is today CUEA. He continued to serve at CUEA, even after retirement, until he returned to his home archdiocese of Tabora, Tanzania, in 2019.

As a university professor and an eminent theologian, Nyamiti was a global scholar, always in high demand throughout the academic world. For over ten years, he was consultor to the Vatican Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, a co-editor of *African Christian Studies*, and a founding member of the Ecumenical Theological Symposium of Scholars from Eastern Africa and of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). He was a resource person for the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

Nyamiti’s academic and scholarly input, apart from his numerous publications, is also evident from the students he inspired and mentored. Since his theological perspective and methodology are Africa-oriented and specifically rooted in an African worldview and in Christianity, Nyamiti influenced many young minds and inspired them to work on theology and philosophy within the African context and perspective.

Among the many people who wrote their doctoral theses on Nyamiti’s works are the Finnish scholar Mika Vahakangas, the Lutheran scholar Stephen Munga who published a book on Nyamiti as champion in the inculturation trend, and Mana Buthelezi, an expert in liberational perspectives. Many other students in Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia have written their licentiate and doctoral dissertations on the theology of Nyamiti.

### Nyamiti’s Theological Vision

Patrick N. Wachege, Nyamiti’s biographer, gives the following summary of Nyamiti’s theological vision:

His vision for African theology is the realization of an African theology of reconstruction. A kind of African theology which will authentically and scientifically marry the inculturation approach with the orientation of liberation theology adhering strictly to orthodoxy and relevance to our changing society and new economic, political and cultural realities. He would wish to be remembered most in this realization, through the students who have successfully

passed through him and in his published works.<sup>2</sup>

Nyamiti's works reveal his theological methodology to be metaphysical, speculative, systematic, and in some cases, abstract in a deductive sense. He chose to publish more articles than books, thus having only few major monographs and many published articles, too numerous to mention – some of which are “books” in and of themselves – to his credit. Internationally renowned scholars like Karl Rahner did the same. As a result, Rahner has to his name twenty volumes of combined articles titled *Theological Investigations*.

We look forward to the day CUEA will collect and publish Nyamiti's numerous articles in volumes under the theme of “African Inculturated Theological Inquiry.” CUEA owes that to Nyamiti, to Africa, and to the global academic community. In his theological endeavor, Nyamiti and Karl Rahner have much in common. Like Rahner, Nyamiti was a hardworking, bold, studious, deeply Catholic, and orthodox scholar. However, like other genuinely creative theologians, people suspected him and misunderstood him at a critical stage when he was developing his methodology for African theology. But he never gave up. He remained authentically African as well as a devout, orthodox Catholic. Throughout, he never tolerated nonsense in his search for knowledge and truth and always stood by his principles.

### Trends in Nyamiti's African Theology

Although Nyamiti laid out his theological methodology and perspective in several papers, he did so most fully in *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective* (1984). Benezet Bujo, the celebrated Congolese African theologian, recognized the exceptional initiative in Nyamiti's work. However, he criticized him for trying to fashion African theology on the model of European speculative scholastic and neo-scholastic tradition. To this criticism, Nyamiti responded, “Does eating African rice with a European spoon make the rice also European?” Both theologians took the African understanding of “ancestor” as a point of departure for their reflection, although they developed it along different lines.

#### *Nyamiti's Christology*

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<sup>2</sup> See P. N. Wachege, “Charles Nyamiti: Vibrant Pioneer of Inculturated African Theology,” in *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, edited by B. Bujo and J. Ilunga Muya (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 2006), 149-162.

## Remembering Paul Dayhoff

For over fifteen years, missionary-turned-historian Paul Dayhoff was an enthusiastic supporter of the DACB, sending in story after story of Nazarene missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in Africa—over 200 in all. In grateful recognition of his faithful contribution to the task of remembering the African Acts of the Apostles, we offer a brief—and, alas, terribly inadequate—biography of his life and ministry. We are honored to have his story join those of the men and women of the African Church of the Nazarene that he loved so well.

### **Dayhoff, Paul S. 1925-2020 Church of the Nazarene South Africa**

Paul Dayhoff was born on October 8, 1925, in Brackpan, Transvaal, South Africa to Rev. Irvin Earl and Fannie (Longenecker) Dayhoff. Paul grew up in the Transvaal. His parents were missionaries to southern Africa from 1916-1960.

Dayhoff attended the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and the Johannesburg College of Education, where he majored in History and Sotho, graduating with his BA degree and Teaching Certificate. In September 1945, he was drafted into the United States Army at Accra, Gold Coast Africa (Ghana). He spent twenty months in the army at the end of World War II. In 1948, he enrolled in Asbury Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, where he studied for a divinity degree, which he completed in 1951. While there, he met Kathleen Taylor, and they were married in September 1950. Soon afterward, Dayhoff was ordained into ministry by the International Holiness Mission (IHM). Kathleen died in February 1952, less than two years after their marriage.

After completing his degree at Asbury, Dayhoff returned to South Africa alone as a missionary just in time to participate in a service of merger of IHM with the Church of the Nazarene. During this time, he corresponded with Margaret Stark, a woman he had met back in US after Kathleen had died. At the time, she was completing her education. Dayhoff asked her in a letter to marry him, and she agreed. After her college graduation, she boarded a ship and sailed for South Africa, arriving in August 1954. The wedding ceremony took place on September 11, 1954.

Dayhoff loved God and spent his life following God's call and direction. His life was spent teaching high school, Bible college, and degree-granting



At the beginning of this interview, I described a group of African scholars working on the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, trying to capture Christianity in the lives of African leaders. Is there any advice you could give to the African leaders and, more importantly, to this particular group?

We have to live our lives according to ethical principles that shape our ordinary life. All I can say is, it's a wonderful initiative, and they should continue. I am always ready to contribute in any way, especially intellectually. I'm not an expert at everything, but I think I have a long experience in our African affairs to share with our brothers and sisters, if this would help shape a better future for our continent.

Thank you, Your Eminence.

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**Interviewer details:** Professor Paul Nchoji Nkwi is Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the Catholic University of Cameroon in Bamenda and a member of the DACB Advisory Council.

Nyamiti attributes to Christ the title of “Brother-Ancestor.” Hence, while Bujo places Christ, the Proto-Ancestor, at the transcendental level, Nyamiti chooses to place Christ, the Brother-Ancestor, at the “biological” level. In this respect, Nyamiti chooses a restricted meaning of the term “ancestor.” For him, the most appropriate meaning of the term for theological purposes is the understanding of ancestor as the immediate parent of given individuals.

Within this context, Nyamiti applies the human ancestral relationship (analogically) to the inner life of God (the Trinity) to show that there is a kind of ancestral kinship among the divine persons. The Father is the *Ancestor* of the Son, the Son is the *Descendant* of the Father. These two *Persons* live their ancestral kinship through the Spirit whom they mutually communicate to us as their ancestral oblation and Eucharist. The Spirit is reciprocally donated not only in token of their mutual love as *Gift* but also on behalf of the homage to their reciprocal holiness (as oblation) and gratitude to their beneficences to each other (as Eucharist). This type of relationship can only be realized in the Holy Spirit, and it is always lived by mutual donation of the divine Spirit between ancestor and descendant.

On how we are related to Christ as our “Brother-Ancestor,” Nyamiti employs a number of arguments. One of these is his claim that the goal of the activity of the earthly Jesus was to show that we can call him our “Brother-Ancestor.” That goal was the restoration of our primordial beatitude which includes our divine adoptive state as offspring lost because of our sins. In other words, this was the bridging of the gap, brought by the fall, between us and our heavenly Ancestor. This was also the objective of Jesus’ prophetic, pastoral, and priestly offices, each of which, in its own way, embodies and manifests his power and excellence. This same objective was also the goal of Christ's Ancestorship itself. To achieve it, the eternal Descendant hypostatically assumed our humanity, and thereby became forever our Brother-Ancestor and, at the same time, bridged the unhappy gap by uniting divinity and humanity in an intimacy that infinitely surpassed the one before the fall.

Therefore, Nyamiti affirms that Christ is our Brother-Ancestor because through him and in the divine Spirit, we have been reconciled with God and made partakers of the Trinitarian life. Likewise, through Christ the Ancestor, we, his descendants, have contact with the Spirit, whom Christ offers us as a Gift (that is, a free and gratuitous donation), but not as oblation. We communicate the Spirit to Christ and through him to the Father—as expression of love, homage (oblation), and thanksgiving. But we do not offer him as a free Gift, because, as descendants of the Logos and the Father, we have the duty and the responsibility to communicate him to them as that which is due to them by strict

right. Nyamiti compares this to the intrinsic function of grace, especially as conveyed through the sacraments.

Again, Nyamiti notes that by actually restoring unto us our happy condition and friendship with God, Christ factualizes his own Ancestorship. His ancestral activity was, moreover, brought about gradually and will be fully accomplished at his second coming, when he will not only completely bridge the gap by erasing all sin and its consequences in us, but will also restore our personal intimacy with God and transform our being in a way that immeasurably exceeds our primordial happy condition. For besides being our Creator and divine Brother in grace as he was before the fall, he will then become our Brother-Ancestor in the fullest and most factual sense of the term.

Furthermore, Nyamiti notes that God could become our Ancestor without the mediation of his incarnate Son by bestowing on us his divine life. But it was his will to establish his ancestorship to us through Christ. He thereby deepened our descendancy in him and raised our human ancestors to a higher level. Indeed, through Christ, God's Ancestorship somehow acquired characteristics of human ancestorship. In the Incarnation, God has become—like human ancestors—an Ancestor through a man (Jesus). Just as human ancestors can operate mystically only after death, so also can God's ancestorship bear its fruits for us only after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

Again, Nyamiti argues that through the Incarnation, God's ancestorship has become like human ancestorship by including mediation between God and men (Christ, the one mediator). In other words, through Christ, God has assumed unto himself the human qualities of ancestorship. In this way, thanks to his Ancestorship, Christ has, in a certain sense, humanized the Ancestorship of his Father and brought it closer to the African type. Thus, through the redeemer, the Father's immanent Ancestorship has become economic. Indeed, the ultimate goal of Christ's Ancestorship is to make us *adopted descendants* of the Father, since our descendancy in the Father is “an added quality of our grace of sonship.”

Nyamiti adds that by incorporating the human ancestors in himself, Christ does not suppress their human *natural* mediation. He united them to himself as family, clan, or tribal ancestors. Hence, ancestral veneration, even when Christianized, is essentially different from the “cult of the saints.” The former is necessarily connected with blood relationship, whereas the latter transcends such relationship. It is for this reason, according to Nyamiti, that the cult of the saints may not be *replaced* by ancestral veneration. For in this matter too, the principle of the Incarnation holds good: through Christ, human ancestorship is divinized without losing its human qualities. But the ancestors become—through Christ—

have just visited a village destroyed by the army, and I asked myself, “What was the purpose?”

**You're making reference to Taben in Bui division of the North West Region, I suppose.**

There are places I have visited, destroyed by the military (not Taben), where the village inhabitants did anything wrong. I heard a soldier was killed there. This ought to be condemned because every life is precious. But this does not mean that when one person is killed, everybody in that village is guilty. I think that by not taking the patience to investigate to get the culprit, the easy way for the army is to just mow people down. And it seems the army has become a gang of thieves in certain areas, because they steal money and other property. I visited a home in Mbi near Tadou where soldiers stole a generator.

**We understand you are writing a book. Can you tell us about it?**

I am writing about human morality, not just Christian morality. Christian morality is based on the word of God, and human morality is based the spiritual part of man as God created him. Every man is spiritual. Every man knows what should be done and what should be avoided. That's why, when you do evil, it strikes you; and when you do good, it strikes you as well. That's why there are prisons, because people know what to do but still act differently. It's a human judgment. By principle, good must be done, and evil must be avoided. That's the fundamental human moral principle for everybody. Before Christ came there were moral principles. He came to give a new dimension to these principles. I am trying to develop a philosophical treatise on morality.

**Is this new effort built on your life as a preacher, as a priest, and as a great leader in the church?**

No, it focuses on society, what the spiritual aspect of society ought to always be, and what it ought not to be.

**What philosophic treatise has been a guiding principle in your life as a student of philosophy?**

What has influenced me in my life is systematic philosophy. That is what shapes the philosophical conscience. Having an idea of philosophy does not make one a philosopher. It does not give you a philosophical conscience. What gives us a philosophical culture or conscience is seeing how to apply the basic principles of science, for these do not change.

**Did they ever think you were trying to take on political leadership?**

Like I said, some politician thought that I was going to be a candidate for the presidential election, so much so that the presidency at one time sent two persons from the diplomatic corps to come and ask me the question directly. This was during the presidential election, and I simply smiled. I told them that I had other ambitions and I have attained them already.

**But don't you think that there are many Cameroonians, both Francophones and Anglophones, who think you are the best choice to provide leadership in a country whose moral fabric is at its lowest level?**

I don't know what they see in me, but I know myself. I cannot run a campaign in a village.

**I think the problem, your eminence, is that you always articulate the very feelings and aspirations of all Cameroonians, both Francophones and Anglophones.**

That's what they say. It is true that I say what my convictions are. And I'm not afraid to say them.

**Absolutely. So, what can you say you are convinced of?**

What I say I am perfectly convinced of, otherwise, I would not say it.

**Okay. Do you have any regrets? Things you should or shouldn't have done?**

Yes. I have regrets concerning my spiritual life. Things that I have done that I shouldn't have done. I won't make them public because this isn't a public confession. I'm conscious of my weaknesses, all of them, and my one ambition is a prayer I repeat after communion every day: "Jesus the savior, make me pure and ..." I repeat this prayer three times. And there's another I repeat daily after mass: "Jesus the savior, strengthen my faith, hope and charity." This is because I feel my weaknesses always.

**What are your dreams and hopes for Africa? If you were to return to this continent one hundred years from now, what would you hope to find? What do you fear you might find?**

What I would like to find is more love of one another. Until we love one another, there will always be wars and rumors of wars.

**Do you think that there are obstacles in achieving this vision?**

The obstacles are human. The obstacles are in our human judgment. I

even more powerful and efficient than before, since their mediation becomes mystically united to that of Christ. Thus, humanity in its totality, including its ancestorship, was destined to be incorporated and perfected in Christ. All this is in keeping with the principle that grace does not destroy nature but presupposes it and perfects it.

However, critics say that one major pitfall in Nyamiti's Christology is his attempt to incorporate the past (that is, pre-Christian) ancestors into the life of Christ, the Brother Ancestor. It is not clear how the life of Christ is imparted to these biological ancestors, whether it is on the basis of a common grace (as Nyamiti seems to say) or by a kind of universalism derived from the efficacy of the resurrection. If Christ is the mystical and spiritual Brother-Ancestor, how can he be related to biological ancestors who are not strictly within the community bound together by faith?

Be that as it may, Nyamiti remains a major voice in relating scientifically and systematically African Ancestral Christology to the mystery of the Trinity. Most of his critics have focused on the moral and cultural implications of African Ancestral Christology.

### *Nyamiti's Ecclesiology*

Nyamiti also has something to say on the relevance of Ancestorship Christology to African ecclesiology (the African reading of Christian community, the Church). He speaks of the Church in terms of what he calls "Koinonia in *Ancestors*." By this, he means that African ecclesiology is inseparable from the idea of the tripartite Church, and therefore is radically incompatible with a purely secular ecclesiology. The Church is related in various ways to Christ, the Ancestor. He is the ancestor of all Church members who are his descendants. In this way, he is the ancestral link of the tripartite Church—the triumphant Church in heaven, the suffering Church in purgatory, and the militant Church on earth. Nyamiti argues that Christ shares his ancestorship with the members of the triumphant Churches, namely with the saints in heaven and purgatory—including the African ancestors who died in him. Through him, these are ancestors of the members of the militant Church on earth, and of every earthly human being. Thus, *the Church is the extension of Christ's Ancestorship to human communities*.

The implication of this for members of the Church has much to be desired, notes Nyamiti. For it implies the exercise of our Savior's ancestral function by the individual believer "in, and by means of, the Church through the incarnation, through his prophetic, pastoral and priestly functions through his healing

ministry, through his divine Spirit, and through the saints in the next world.” Nyamiti notes that this is carried out in the spirit of *koinonia* borrowing from the Trinitarian life. In this way, the Church, which is the continuation of the mystery of Christ in human communities, witnesses through these functions and lives of her members that she is indeed the medium and organ of Christ's ancestorship to humankind.

However, critics say that Nyamiti has devoted less attention to the basic difference that exists between the baptized in Christ and the African ancestors. Those who make up the tripartite Church are the baptized in Christ. The members of the suffering or triumphant Churches are Christians who followed and bore witness to Christ, the risen Lord. But how the African ancestors, who neither witnessed the Paschal mystery nor are baptized in Christ, could be counted members of the tripartite Church is not well developed in Nyamiti's theology. But at least, he has shown us the way for developing an African Ancestral Ecclesiology.

#### *Nyamiti's African Spirituality*

For Nyamiti, all our supernatural activities (prayer, good works, reception of the sacraments) become the means for deepening human and divine ancestorship for us. Just as human descendants have the duty to be in regular contact with their ancestors through prayers and ritual offerings, so also Christians must be in contact with their heavenly Ancestor through religious activities and works that befit Christian existence. The holier a person is, the better ancestor or descendant he or she is, whereas a person in the state of sin has lost the basis for divine ancestorship and is badly disposed for filial relations with his or her ancestors.

Furthermore, Nyamiti argues that since ancestors are archetypes of nature and behavior, as well as sources of tradition, Christians are bound to respect Christian tradition and to imitate their heavenly Ancestor. The great model here is Christ himself. In the same vein, in time of need and affliction, Christians should always turn to their divine Ancestor, for ancestors are also helpers and protectors. Christians who limit their efforts to earthly means in a time of difficulty act against African customs and fail to fulfil their ancestral duties to God, who is then entitled to punish their negligence. Finally, Nyamiti contends that, since African ancestors desire as many descendants as possible, it is the duty of filial piety for Christians to try to win as many converts to Christianity as possible. This implies that applying the idea of “ancestor” to God should lead to a renewed missionary spirit among Christians.

*régimes politiques d'Ahmadou Ahidjo, de Paul Biya et Christian Tumi: prêtre* (2006) [The two political regimes of Ahmadou Ahidjo, of Paul Biya and Christian Tumi, priest?]

The book is about the political situations in which I have lived, the Ahidjo and Biya regimes. It talks about the relationship I had with the different administrations as a priest. This started with a group I founded and to which Bishop Paul Verdzev was invited. It was known as “The Christian Study Group.” I started in Bamenda when I was just a simple priest, and it continues till today.

#### **What do you think is your significant achievement?**

Obviously, the fact that the bishops listened me regarding the founding of a major seminary constitutes a source of pride for me. I had no knowledge about establishing a major seminary. I just read all the church documents that eventually guided me in founding the major seminary in Bambui.

#### **It seems you laid the foundation for the training of future of priests. Can you talk to us about that?**

Let me also include the Diocese of Yagoua. My appointment as Bishop of Yagoua in 1979 was indeed an opportunity for me to found a young church. While in Yagoua, I had only two Cameroonians priests; all the others were foreign missionaries. Today, there are over fifty priests in that diocese. I also established a minor seminary in Guinée/Guidee.

#### **Can you say the Archbishop of Douala is among the generation of priests you trained?**

The Archbishop of Douala was one of my senior seminarians from Yagoua. He had just finished his philosophy at Nkolbisson, near Yaoundé, and I sent him for theological studies in Rome.

#### **In terms of shaping the future of Cameroon, have your contacts with the two heads of state had any impact on these two leaders of our country? That is, Ahidjo and Paul Biya?**

I don't think so. At the time of Ahidjo, people were afraid for nothing. I never had political ambitions in my life. Because of my defense of truth and justice, people thought I wanted to become president of Cameroon. I never, and will never, dream of it, but in my mind, this is the truth and the right thing to do.

After being rector of the Major Seminary in Bambui, I was appointed Bishop of Yagoua in 1980. The actual appointment was on December 6, 1979, and I was ordained by Pope John Paul II (now beatified) on January 6, 1980, in Rome as Bishop of Yagoua. Three of us were consecrated on the same day. One of the three is of late, Bishop Martino of Milan (Archbishop), and another worked in the diplomatic service of the church.

### **Why did they choose to ordain you in Rome?**

Only the Pope can answer that question, as I was already planning my ordination in Yagoua. I go to Yaoundé to meet the Nuncio to make preparations for Yagoua. On arrival in Bamenda, Bishop Paul tells me he has received a call from the Nuncio in Yaoundé telling him that the Pope will ordain me in Rome, and so I had to leave for Rome within a week.

Bishop Paul followed me throughout important ecclesiastical experiences and happenings. He was there in Soppo when I was ordained a priest in 1966, when I said my first mass in Kikaikilaiki, in Rome when I was consecrated bishop in 1980, and when I was raised to the rank of cardinal in 1988. He was the one person I was close to and who knew me very well. It's Paul who wrote my CV with details I never knew.

I was bishop of Yagoua for three years and then transferred to Garoua as archbishop for two years, replacing Archbishop Yves Pioumet. I was sent to Garoua because, as the Nuncio explained, the Holy Father wanted me there since I was the only Cameroonian bishop who knew well the north province.

After eight years in Garoua, again the Nuncio told me that the Holy Father wanted me to move to Douala. I was raised to the rank of Cardinal in 1988, and I moved to Douala in 1991. So, one day I meet St. John Paul II, and he told me it wasn't an easy decision for him to move me from Garoua to Douala.

His reason was that while in the north, I was dialoguing seriously with Islam on religious liberty. I was moved to Douala to handle administrative problems. That's how I got to Douala. On arrival in Douala, the coffers had barely 48,000 FCFA. Unbelievable!

### **What are the greatest challenges you have faced in your life?**

I have never had them. I just did my work as a priest and bishop. And I enjoyed every step.

### **Further Interview Conversation on April 3, 2020**

**What about the book you write about yourself entitled in French *Les deux***

In any case, critics say that in spite of the positive aspects of Nyamiti's ancestorship model as it relates to the works of inculturation of Christian mystery in Africa, the fact is that the presence of lesser deities (and ancestor veneration) in African Traditional Religion still creates a great problem in the search for an authentic African Christology, ecclesiology, and spirituality. Be that as it may, none of the critics have given us anything new other than what has been said already by Nyamiti and a few others.

### **How and Where I Encountered Prof. Nyamiti**

Nyamiti's inculturated theology, especially his African Christology, formed the central point of my doctoral thesis in Rome between 1994 and 1998 when I was studying at the Pontifical Urbaniana University. Later, as a professor myself in this same university after my studies, I not only taught Nyamiti's work in my class on African theology but also encouraged a good number of my students to choose topics for their dissertations related to Nyamiti's theology, as well as the thought of other renowned pioneer African theologians.

Thus I first met Nyamiti through his writing. It began when I was contemplating a topic for my licentiate thesis. I approached one of my professors at the Pontifical Urbaniana University to ask him to be the moderator for the thesis. I wanted him to direct my proposed thesis on Christology and proclamation in a pluralistic society in the light of Pope John Paul's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. Looking at me and the theme, the professor, who is not an African but rather a Vietnamese scholar, a third world theologian, challenged me in a way I never imagined.

The professor told me that the topic I had chosen was good but that it was Western in context, content, and scope. He told me that there was nothing new I would write on that others had not already written on. Moreover, he said that the topic addressed a context other than my African context; that no matter what I wrote, my work would never be judged original nor would it address my African context and scope.

Then came the bombshell. The professor told me that some African scholars were talking about "Christ as our Ancestor," "Christology from an African perspective," "models for an African reading of the Mystery of Christ," and so forth. He said that even though he did not completely share their views, he would like me to go, research the topic, read up on it, and come back. "If you think you can write about it, that will be good. Otherwise, we will look for another topic," the professor told me. He gave me one month to do this and come back to him.

That was how I met Nyamiti and other pioneer African theologians, anthropologists, and philosophers of note in a very personal and deep way. After my licentiate dissertation, which more or less was on elements in African Traditional Religion for an African reading of the mystery of Christ, I continued with the research in my doctoral thesis, entitled “Trends in African Theology since Vatican II.” In each of these moments, the thought of Charles Nyamiti loomed large.

I first met Prof. Nyamiti in person during the 2000 Year Jubilee International Missiological Congress in Rome. It was a great privilege to say I was instrumental in inviting him and two other African scholars as resource persons and speakers at the event. The International Missiological Congress, held on October 17-20, 2000, at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome, where I teach, was on the theme of “Christology and Mission Today.” The Congress was jointly organized by the Pontifical Urbaniana University and International Association for Catholic Missiologists (IACM). I was then the executive secretary of IACM.

As a member of the planning committee for the International Missiological Congress, I insisted that, in choosing the speakers to invited, Africa and the other continents must all be equally represented. I put forth the names of three African scholars, Professors John S. Mbiti, Charles Nyamiti, and Benezet Bujo. Later, the committee and the Vatican officials invited them to the Congress. Indeed, it was a great opportunity for me to appreciate the contribution of these great African scholars to the development of African theology.

You can imagine how happy I was sitting and socializing with these great men, our “ancestors” and legends in African theology, especially considering how young I was then in the university teaching profession. That was the first and the last time I spoke personally with Prof. Nyamiti. But I have never ceased to meet and dialogue with him through his numerous publications. In addition, I continue to encounter him through his former students from CUEA, now my students in Rome.

## Conclusion

Today, Africa mourns Prof. Charles Nyamiti just few months after the demise of John S. Mbiti, another great pioneer of African theology. “How are the mighty falling?” Mbiti rehabilitated and brought into the limelight the latent theology hidden in African Traditional Religion (ATR and philosophy), to make it compete as an equal partner and as a religion in its own right with other great religions of the world. Charles Nyamiti, however, for his part, “baptized” the

**Talking about Bishop Paul, most of us looked at him like a real preacher, in the way he prepared his sermons systematically.**

His homilies were too intellectual and very educative, but they seemed not to be for the ordinary man.

**But they were based on the church’s teachings.**

Yes, but not for the ordinary man’s level. That’s the only criticism I have. He made it a point to always prepare his speeches and sermons. If he didn’t prepare on a subject, he wouldn’t talk. For example, he wouldn’t just read the first and second reading, and the gospel, and spontaneously preach. He refused even when he came to my chapel in Douala.

**Why do you think he did this?**

I believe it was because he is afraid of heresy or anything against Catholic doctrine. He was too conscious of that. He was also conscious of his duties as a priest and as a bishop.

**As such, he lived his life in poverty. He didn’t have an account? Is that true?**

Throughout my years travelling to Europe, as bishop or cardinal, I never took or carried money with me. I have never owned a bank account and don’t imagine a priest having one. Today some do. All gifts sent to me either go to the diocese in Douala or to the diocese of Kumbo. No bank accounts. Neither am I poor nor rich.

**Apart from Bishop Paul Verdzev, who has had an impact in your life? You mentioned Bishop Awa Pius earlier.**

We lived, worked, and influenced one another. Bishop Awa was a difficult person to live with. Whenever he got angry, it was tough to bring his temper down. Once in Soppo, Awa insisted on going to Sasse College to see Tasinda, the principal. Along the way, I felt so uneasy, and I asked him that we return. So, we returned to Soppo.

**Who from among the lay people made an impact in your life?**

Dr. Bernard Fonlon was my primary teacher in my home village of Kikaikilaiki, but he came to regard me as more of a small friend. My mother used to cook food for him as he didn’t cook himself. He was an excellent flute maestro and would often walk around the village playing a tune. I had a lot of admiration for him. When I was made Bishop of Yagoua in 1980, Dr. Fonlon came to visit me, staying for a few days.

Catholic University of Central Africa.

Bishop Nkuo of Kumbo Diocese was one of my students (third batch). It is interesting to note that I admitted Bishop Nkuo into the Bishop Rogan Minor Seminary and, in 1978, I admitted him into the Bambui Major Seminary. In that same year, 1978, I asked Prof. Nchoji Nkwi to come and teach cultural anthropology to our seminarians. Cultural anthropology was considered important for the training of African priests.

**Among all these people you have met in your priestly ministry, is there anyone you can really say made a difference in your life or helped, as a teacher, friend, bishop, etc.?**

The bishops, of course. Bishop Paul Verdzekov was ahead of me in primary school. We were almost the same age with only a difference of three months between us, I being the elder. During one of our 'play fights' in the village, Paul entered the house and took the gizzard, saying, "It's not because you are three months older than me that gives you the permission to have it." He walked off and ate the gizzard. And I said, "If anything happens to you, don't ask why, as you have not respected the traditional rites." It was said in jest. (In this part of Cameroon, gizzards of chickens are eaten only by the elders.)

**How did Bishop Paul Verdzekov influence your life?**

We were great friends. I admired also his studious way of life and his ambitions and vision about the new Major Seminary in Bambui. When I was appointed rector of the seminary, we were advised to affiliate it to the major universities so students could obtain first degrees in ecclesiastical sciences of theology and philosophy. Still the lone Cameroonian on the academic staff, I met stiff resistance to the issue of affiliation. The non-African members of staff asserted in very strong terms that the seminary would only breed intellectuals.

I went to Bishop Paul Verdzekov and Bishops Pius Awa and told them what the thinking was among a majority of staff members. I further told them that I wanted to know their thoughts on the matter. Bishop Paul said, "If anybody can cite a document of the church to prove that you are going against the intentions of the holy seal, let the person produce the document. So please continue with what you are doing."

With this strong response I continued the affiliation project of the seminary and eventually obtained the affiliation of philosophy and theology. As such, students got out of Bambui with two degrees. This made it possible for our students to pursue further their studies anywhere in the world.

African religious and cultural heritage and helped to establish it in theological education as a major source for an inculturated systematic and scientific African Christian theology.

With great perseverance, a sense of purpose, tenacity, and doggedness, but always sustained by his love and faith in Jesus Christ and the Church, Prof. Nyamiti through his numerous writings, publications, conferences, and other academic and pastoral engagements, gave the Church an inculturated African Christology—an African scientific and systematic theology per se, acceptable across cultures and lands. Nyamiti, through his numerous writings and scholarly productions, developed a theological methodology of inculturation that is truly African and truly Christian. With it, he raised the study of African Christian theology to the same level as the study of traditional Christian theology in faculties of theology and religious studies across the globe.

Adieu, Prof. Charles Nyamiti. May the Angels and African "Ancestors," our Saints in the faith about whom you have written so marvelously, receive you in the Kingdom of God in heaven! Amen!

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criticism of English philosophers. Choosing an African theme would have delayed further my desire to return home.

**Do you think that this kind of education prepared you for the life you have lived?**

Yes. I think those who have gone through different stages of formation prepare themselves for life.

**It seems the training you received prepared you for the pioneering work in your priestly ministry, especially in the creation of the St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary. Is this true?**

While I was studying in Europe, discussions about creating a major seminary in English-speaking Cameroon were ongoing. Bishop Awa consulted three of us: Fr. Clement Ndze in Germany, Fr. Engelbert Kufon in Rome, and myself in Switzerland. He told us of the possible creation of the major seminary, and he wanted our reactions to the idea. I asked him (Bishop Awa) who would be the rector, and the bishop replied, "Fr. Clement." I was happy with the answer, but I said, "It's good we should begin something ourselves instead of always inheriting from others. Either we succeed, or die in the attempt to succeed." Fr. Clement eventually turned down the offer. Bishop Awa turned to me, and I took on the task head-on with open arms. Fr. Clement said he would give his full support. The bishop's long journey in finding a rector finally came to an end.

In all this, it was a job not open to failure. Some people thought the project would not succeed. I talked to Bishop Paul Verdzekov, who confirmed my fears. However, I said, "I will do it and do it well or die attempting doing it well." Bishop Paul Verdzekov went to the founding fathers and told them, "Not at this time." "Point taken, and we shall support you" was their response.

I went to Nigeria to see some bishops and visited the Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu. On my return, I told Fr. Clement, "There's nothing there that we can imitate; we read the documents of the church and built on that, the directives." When the seminary at Bambui was opened in September 1973, I was the only African on the teaching staff. The others were European Benedictines and Franciscans who taught temporarily before going on to Nigeria.

At the time, there were just eight teachers and twelve students. Nine later on became priests. Amongst the staff of eight, I served as rector with Fr. McGild, among other Europeans. Nine of my pioneer priests studied in Europe, and one of them became Rector of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, Bambui. This showed the quality and competence of the pioneer priests. One of these pioneer priests was Father Patrick Adeso (R.I.P.), who later became a professor at the



Ndongmo, who visited him often in Buea. On this particular day, my bishop narrated my story to Mgr. Ndongmo. He responded by saying, “Send him to Lyon in France. That’s where I have sent my priests.” And that’s how I found myself in Lyon, France. It is there that I did my master’s degree.

After graduating from Lyon, I went to Switzerland to serve in the cathedral Parish of Fribourg. While living in the parish house, the parish priest, a German, very hardworking and active, proposed that I apply for a scholarship and study in Fribourg. I eventually obtained a scholarship from L’oeuvre St. Justin and went on to do my doctorate of philosophy at the University of Fribourg.

Prof. Nkwi, who was already studying in the same university, encouraged me to apply. He even took me to Fr. Bernardin, the director of the scholarship board. After studying his request, I was offered the scholarship. So, I moved from Lyon to Fribourg.

It is during this period away from Cameroon, that my diocese, Buea, was split, and a new diocese of Bamenda was created. With the creation of the Bamenda diocese, the priests in the former Diocese of Buea were asked to choose. And so I made the obvious choice, the Diocese of Bamenda. The new Bishop for the Diocese of Bamenda was Paul Verdzekov, who gave me the permission to continue with my advanced studies. So, with the bishop’s permission, I went on and got my doctorate at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland.

Prof. Urs was my professor and supervisor of my PhD thesis. Before I chose him, I had been warned that he was a very tough and strict person. Even those who gave me the scholarship to study at the University of Fribourg were surprised and amazed at how quick I validated my thesis. This was because I didn’t take any vacations, outings, or visits whatsoever. I went to bed at midnight and rose by 5pm. I worked hard day and night to meet the standards of my tough professor.

Prof. Urs made it possible for doctoral students to present chapters of their dissertations to the group. Since he presided over group discussions of thesis chapters, the students were confident about incorporating his comments in the rewrite of appropriate chapters. This method encouraged me to be always ready with chapters of my thesis.

Instead of praising me, Prof. Urs praised the Germans as he made the following a joke: “I see that the Germans left something in Cameroon: handwork.” My sponsors and other professors were very happy with the progress I made, and I finished in record time especially as I was anxious to return to Cameroon. As soon as I graduated with a *summa cum laude*, I was on a flight home. Although I was interested in African philosophy, I chose to focus on a

## “Jesus! Say It Once and the Matter Is Settled”: The Life and Legacy of Oral Theologian Madam Afua Kuma of Ghana (1908–1987)<sup>3</sup>

By Sara J. Fretheim

### Introduction

Madam Afua Kuma of Ghana (baptized Christiana Gyane), one of the first modern African female oral theologians, “represent[s] the women who weave lyrics about Jesus and pour their hearts out in prayer and praise at all times and in all places, the women whose theology gets ‘reduced’ into writing by those who can write.”<sup>4</sup> She is known to us today through a small booklet of her extemporaneous prayers and praises, *Kwaebirentuw ase Yesu: Afua Kuma ayeyi ne mpaabo / Jesus of the Deep Forest: The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma*, a transcription/translation of her Christologically-focused praises.<sup>5</sup>

Living during a complex period of Ghana’s history, from the end of the colonial period and into post-independence, Madam Afua Kuma earned widespread recognition in Ghana for her gift for offering these oral praises, which

<sup>3</sup> This research was funded in part from a grant from the Nagel Institute for World Christianity, Calvin University, MI, USA, which was funded by the Templeton Religion Trust, Nassau, Bahamas. It formed part of a larger project entitled “Language, Literature, Prayer, and Music Repertoires as Sources of African Christian Spirituality and Values,” led by Dr Rose Mary Amenga-Etego at the University of Ghana (2018–2020). I am also grateful to Jon Kirby, S.V.D. for sharing some more of Afua Kuma’s unpublished praises with me, which they are preparing for publication. Finally, I interviewed and stayed with Afua Kuma’s son Emmanuel and his wife Jane in Asempaneye several times throughout this project, and their sons Tetteh and Ofori provided important information and translation, and also took me to visit a number of Afua Kuma’s different homes and communities. Afua Kuma’s final home was with Emmanuel, and she worked with Jane as a Traditional Birth Attendant. I remain grateful to each of them for their important contributions, without which this biographical information would not have been accessible. For further details about this project, see [www.sarafretheim.com](http://www.sarafretheim.com).

<sup>4</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Jesus Christ,” in the *Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. by Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 151–170: 153.

<sup>5</sup> *Jesus of the Deep Forest: The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma*, ed. and trans. by Jon Kirby, S.V.D. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1980). Audio recording of her praises began in 1976, and Fr. Kirby, Joseph Kwakye, Peter Kwasi Ameyaw, Vincent Adjepong, Michael Owusu Nimako and others also worked together on transcription and English translations.

she shared in a variety of Christian settings. More recently, she has gained a small but growing following among academics from both the Global South and North, who find her an important source for African Christian thought.

Her praises are significant for a number of reasons. First, they display Afua Kuma's incredible theological and linguistic ingenuity in adapting a traditional chiefly praise format, familiar in her Akan culture, for vibrant, Christologically-focused praise. Although she drew on aspects of the phrasing and verbal structures of this traditional format, she was the first to transform this rich template for Christian worship. The resulting praises capture the spiritual imagination of listeners with their exceptional displays of linguistic, cultural, and theological inventiveness. The following example illustrates this beautifully, with the themes of praise, eschatology, and redemption explored through biblical allusions superimposed upon her Ghanaian context:

Jesus says if we raise Him high,  
He will draw all things to Himself.  
So, let us go and praise His name,  
and let us raise Him up on high.  
Drummers, bring your assorted drums  
and start playing the *Atumpan*.<sup>6</sup>  
Let your strokes beat out proud rhythms  
to honor the name of Jesus,  
and join the earth to the heavens.

Jesus, if You do not help us,  
there is nowhere else we can turn.  
You who are always close at hand,  
if You do not come to our aid,  
then we are lost; no one can help.

Jesus, the redeemer of all,  
come to receive our prayerful thanks.  
Musicians come and play your lutes  
—let them praise and honor Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> "A type of drum used by peoples of southern Ghana." *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D., (unpublished), 55.

Ibadan and move to Enugu Bigard Memorial Seminary, where I completed my priestly formation.

### **What brought you to the Holy Family Seminary, Sasse?**

I came to see the rector, Father Tool, who was the Rector of the Minor Seminary. He told me to go back to Nigeria, but I was not satisfied with his decision. On leaving, I met with Father Olyslagar, who advised me not to return to Nigeria but to discuss the issue with Bishop Rogan, the Bishop of Buea. When I met Bishop Rogan, he told me to go back to Nigeria, pack, come back to Cameroon, and prepare to go to Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu, Nigeria. He had effectively accepted me as a future priest of his diocese.

It is interesting to note that on my arrival at Holy Family Seminary, Sasse, the person who first received me and gave me a tour of the campus is the same person interviewing me today, Nkwi Nchoji Paul. Life is an interesting experience. Did I ever know or guess we would be sitting here and chatting about my life experiences?

Having been accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Buea, I was sent to Enugu, where I spent six years and was ordained on April 17, 1966, in Soppo. After my ordination I returned to Enugu to finish some courses for my priestly studies. My first appointment as a young priest was in Kumba, where I served for a year. I was later transferred to the minor seminary in Soppo to teach because Bishop Rogan had retired. After two years I was sent to France for further studies. My new bishop, Julius Peteers, decided to send me for further studies along with others.

After the reunification of Cameroon, the Bishop of Buea continued to send his seminarians to Enugu, Nigeria, despite the fact that there was a major seminary in Yaoundé. One day I asked my bishop why he kept sending seminarians to Nigeria when there was a major seminary in Cameroon. He said, "Christian, that's a political question."

After my ordination in 1966, my bishop wanted me to go for further studies. This, of course, troubled me, as I wished to know why my colleagues and I were being sent abroad. As a man of dialogue, the bishop was ready to answer whatever questions I had in mind. So, I said I was ready to go and study in Rome but would prefer to study in Cameroon and learn the French language, as the country was bilingual.

My bishop said he did not know where to send me for further studies, and so I proposed Congo Kinshasa. He said Mobuto had suspended the Catholic University of Lovanium for two years, and students were being sent for military training. He had a friend from the Diocese of Nkongsamba, Monseigneur

was a hundred kilometers away from where my parents lived, Mbom. There was a public school close by, but my father had to consult the parish priest in Jos, about sixty kilometers away from Mbom, to obtain permission for me to attend a government school.

My father was authorized to allow me to attend a government primary school only on condition that I complete my primary education at St. Theresa's Catholic School, Jos. That's where I finished my primary education. Because I loved teaching, I went to a Teachers' Training College after standard 6. I was very often called up to teach the pupils in the lower classes when the teachers were not available. So my love for teaching was nurtured and began to grow.

### So how long was the Teachers' Training College course?

I spent three years in the Teacher's Training College, after which I received my vocation to the priesthood. This was during my professional training as a teacher. The Teacher's Training College was Catholic. The Catholic Church had many teachers' training colleges for training Catholic teachers, especially the one in Nkafachang in the Jos diocese.

I received my vocation in funny (absurd/bizarre) way when I got a letter from a primary schoolmate from Jos. He was in the minor seminary in Ibadan. So, I said to myself that if Stephen, my former classmate, could make it into the seminary, then I could as well. If Stephen Mao, my own tribesman, who was a rascal and extremely headstrong could make it into the seminary, then I too could. I recall Stephen beating up a teacher.

I then prayed and fasted, asking God to call me to the seminary as he had called Stephen. At the end of the year, the principal of the TTC, an Irishman called Father McLill, sent me to the minor seminary in Ibadan, where Stephen was.

No sooner had I arrived in the seminary than Stephen was dismissed. So, people thought I would leave the seminary because Stephen had been dismissed. The seed had been sown into my heart, so there was no way I would leave the seminary. I had prayed for this, and God had answered my prayer.

### When did you go to the junior seminary?

I can't remember the exact date, but I think it was around 1952. I was enrolled into philosophy in my first year in Ibadan, and I left that minor seminary in 1954. With the potential civil strife in Nigeria, my parents decided to return home to Cameroon. I told my Nigerian bishop that I would also return home. I came back to Cameroon and went straight to meet Bishop Rogan, the bishop of Buea diocese at the time. Bishop Rogan told me to leave the Major Seminary in

All you singers sing your praise songs<sup>7</sup>  
—let them rise to Him like incense.

You drums beat your song in tribute!  
*Nnawuta* and *aduwuro*,<sup>8</sup>  
—you instruments of King David—  
and you, the *mfirikiwa*<sup>9</sup>;  
all of you come and play your song  
while Jesus is leading the way.

Northern peoples play their *nnonno*,<sup>10</sup>  
their multi-stringed instruments.  
Let them lead Him in procession.  
Let strong porters put on head-pads  
to carry Him high on their heads.  
We shall hear the words of His mouth  
—we shall listen to His stories.

See the multitudes of people  
from all the nations of the earth.  
I feel shamed to be among them,  
truly sorrowful to be there.  
The devil has hurled us all,  
including myself, into mud  
—an enormous black pool of filth—  
and has shackled our feet with chains.

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<sup>7</sup> "Praise songs are sung by courtiers or those specially trained in the art to honor chiefs, heroes, and great men and women at durbars, festivals, solemn processions, and state events." *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D., (unpublished), 55.

<sup>8</sup> "These are musical instruments that are used to announce something important or a person of importance." *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D., (unpublished), 55.

<sup>9</sup> "Another type of Akan musical instrument." *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D., (unpublished), 55.

<sup>10</sup> "Another type of Akan musical instrument." *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D., (unpublished), 55.

Jesus has made his blood a rope  
to drag us all out of the pit!  
Thousands of tongues roar out His name  
—give Him praise for what He has done!<sup>11</sup>

A second reason for the significance of Afua Kuma's praises is the fact that traditionally, while women played a part in these processions, only men held the role of chiefly praise singers. By contrast, Afua Kuma, a woman, confidently appropriated this genre and was widely respected and celebrated for sharing her gift. As Archbishop Emeritus Peter Sarpong remarked, "For her to do this is like a miracle to me – I don't know where she'd get such words! They are very difficult and obscure; very unusual. It's really wonderful!"<sup>12</sup>

Afua Kuma is also important in that she points us "writing theologians" to the significance of oral theologies, and particularly women's oral theological contributions, a field replete with treasures requiring further examination.<sup>13</sup> In engaging with Afua Kuma's Christian community, it was quickly apparent that while she was uniquely gifted, she was by no means alone, but rather, representative of many Christian women in Ghana (and elsewhere across the African continent) who are engaged in what Ghanaian "writing theologian" Kwame Bediako has called "grassroots" or "mother tongue" theologies.

While all theology is contextualized to a degree, grassroots theologies are highly contextualized, less formal, and predominantly oral, drawing inspiration and images from the theologian's culture, community, and Christian tradition, expressed through performative forms such as prayers, praises, songs, and stories to engage questions of Christian thought and praxis. Furthermore, they are expressed in the vernacular, making them at once a deeply felt expression on the part of the theologian while remaining easily accessible to her audience. Bediako argues that "it is only through the vernacular that a genuine and lasting theological dialogue with culture can take place."<sup>14</sup> He sees in Afua Kuma's praises "theology which comes from where the faith lives and must live continually, in the conditions of life of the community of faith, the theology of the living church, reflecting faith in the living Lord as present reality in daily

<sup>11</sup> *Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D. (unpublished).

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Archbishop Emeritus Peter Sarpong, Kumasi, June 2018.

<sup>13</sup> I borrow the term "writing theologians" from Oduyoye, "Jesus Christ," (151–170): 153.

<sup>14</sup> Kwame Bediako, "How Is It That We Hear in Our Own Languages the Wonders of God?: Christianity as Africa's Religion," in Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995, reprinted 1997), 59–74: 73.

## Interview of Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi

By Prof. Paul Nkwi

*Cardinal Tumi is Archbishop Emeritus of Douala (Cameroon). He was proclaimed cardinal by Pope St. John Paul II in 1988, and he served as archbishop from 1991-2009.*

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

I was born in Kikaikilaiki, Nso, on October 15, 1930. I started my primary education here in Kikaikilaiki. I did eleven years of primary school, three years in the local language. Prof. Fonlon was my teacher, and he taught me in Lamso. After three years, I went to Shisong, a neighboring village, to begin strictly primary school in English. In Shisong, I started with what was then known as infant 1 and 2, then standard 1-6.

After six years of primary education, I decided to go to Nigeria and meet my parents. I travelled from Kikaikilaiki to Jos, Nigeria, on foot, and it took over a month for us to make the journey. We went without shoes because there were no shoes in those days. Upon arrival in Nigeria, I nearly died, travelling for a month without rest except for Sundays, for the person I travelled with was a staunch Christian. "Sundays is the day of the Lord" was what Pa Ngondze said, and so we didn't travel on Sundays. This was the day I always looked forward to for rest.

### Can we say he is one of those who played a role in your Catholic faith?

This Pa Ngondze cared a lot for me throughout the journey. My uncle was a trader in kola nuts on the long distant trade to Nigeria. As he carried his kola nuts, I carried a bag of corn flour, the basis of our daily feeding. As an experienced long distance trader, I had been entrusted to him to get me to my parents in Jos. That's how I joined my parents and finished my primary education in Nigeria.

When I finally joined my parents, they wanted to send me elsewhere, as there were no Catholic schools in Jos. At that time, a Catholic was not allowed to send his children to a non-Catholic school. Being headstrong at the time, I told my parents "No." I refused to leave my parents again.

Searching for a Catholic school would mean separation, and it was completely out of place for me to leave my parents. The nearest Catholic school

We see it in the attitude to life of the young who have become greedy and want wealth without work.

I look back at the life of the old Presbyterians and other pastors who, with their Standard 7 leaving certificate, had a wealth of knowledge and continued to be trained theologically for the pastoral ministry. With few resources, they set up schools and hospitals and educated and cared for people. Today the churches are not following that example.

I'm watching our technological advancement and seeing it as a double-edged sword that is taking from us as much as it is giving. Moral education has not gone hand in hand with moral development, and it has become easy to hide our deficiencies, which will catch up with us sooner or later.

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

If I have any it would be simply "Do the Word." Live humbly, learn to work with your hands, and find no task as being beneath you. Put God and country above self. If you follow this simple rule, you can do anything, and you can find joy.

### **Interviewee Publications:**

Evans-Anfom, Emmanuel. *To the Thirsty Land: Autobiography of a Patriot*. Accra, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 2003.

Evans-Anfom, Emmanuel. *Traditional Medicine in Ghana: Practice, Problems and Prospects*. Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol 17, JB Danquah Memorial Lectures, 1993.

Evans-Anfom, Emmanuel. *Political leadership and national development in Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: N.pub., 1992.

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**Interviewer details:** Rev. Dr. Esther Acolatse is Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Intercultural Studies at Knox College, University of Toronto, Canada, and a member of the DACB Advisory Council.

life."<sup>15</sup> This is clearly evident in her praises above, which paint a beautiful picture of those from diverse Ghanaian communities joining together in worship using traditional instruments and the framework of familiar community celebrations to "roar out His name" in thanksgiving!

For this reason, Afua Kuma's praises—and oral theologies in general—are a rich source of insight into the lived experiences and theological reflections of many Christians, and often women's voices in particular. Indeed, Afua Kuma's praises reflect the complexity of late-colonial and early post-independence Ghana, with imagery drawn expansively from her experiences with farming, midwifery, family, and diverse facets of traditional Akan life and culture, as well as more modern aspects of development, law, policing, education, and healthcare, for example. As such, it is accurate to call her "a product of two worlds," a reality clearly seen in her praises.<sup>16</sup>

### **Birth and Early Life**

Since Afua Kuma introduces herself in some of her unpublished praises elsewhere, it seems fitting to begin with her own words here:

I am a Ghanaian from Kwahu Obo.  
My father's name is Albert Omari.  
He was a senior Presbyter in the Presbyterian Church.  
He has long gone to his Maker.  
My full name is Christiana Gyane,  
My other name is Afua Kuma.  
Anyone can find me by asking these names.

Elizabeth Nartey Somuaa is my daughter.  
Her husband is pastor Nartey.  
He is the senior pastor

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<sup>15</sup> Kwame Bediako, "Cry Jesus! Christian Theology and Presence in Modern Africa," in *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Akropong: Regnum Africa, 2000), 3–19: 9. First published in *Vox Evangelica*, 23 (1993): 7–25. For further discussion, see Sara J. Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship: Emerging Religious Discourse in Twentieth-Century Ghana*, African Christian Studies Series 13, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Akosua Anyidoho, "Techniques of Akan Praise Poetry in Christian Worship: Madam Afua Kuma," in *Multiculturalism and Hybridity in African Literatures*, ed. by Hal Wylie and Bernth Lindfors (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000), 71–86: 74.

in the Church of Pentecost.  
 People can find me if they contact  
 any of the people I mentioned.  
 If people are looking for me, I stay in Obo.  
 One other town where they can find me is  
 Asempaneye or Atuobikrom.  
 Let us all say a big “Amen!”<sup>17</sup>

The date of Afua Kuma’s birth is not certain, but is thought to be around 1908. As she tells us, she was born in the town of Obo Kwahu in Ghana’s Eastern Region. Her name, “Afua,” indicates that she was born on a Friday, and “Kuma” that she was younger or smaller, perhaps because she was the second born in her family. Significantly, she was from a royal family; however, she did not associate closely with the palace and carried that connection lightly, with many interviewees remarking that she was known for her humble spirit and simple lifestyle.

In her childhood, she stayed with her parents at Huhunywa in the Ga Adangbe area. She helped her parents in their farming work. As such, she was well trained in both farming and trading, and was an oral learner well versed in Twi (her mother tongue). However, she did not attend school or become literate, less common for girls at that time. Because of this, however, she strongly emphasized the importance of school and literacy to her children and grandchildren, seeing its value. As one interviewee emphasized, we should remember that “she was not schooled, but *educated*. There is a big difference between the two!”<sup>18</sup> In the town of Obo, her father was the first to own commercial transport vehicles and the family was reasonably prosperous.

## Marriage and Family Life

As a young adult, she was first married to an army officer. She gave birth to her first daughter around 1928.<sup>19</sup> However, her father was unhappy with this

<sup>17</sup> Unpublished praises by Afua Kuma tentatively titled *The Prayers and Praises of Afua Kuma, Volume II*, translated and edited by Joseph Kwakye and Jon Kirby, S.V.D.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, February 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Her grandsons suggested that her first husband had been a WWII vet, a Ghana/Nigeria/East Africa commander in Burma. However, the dates for this do not work, as the Burma campaign was in 1944, significantly later than Afua Kuma’s likely date of marriage, given Dora’s birthdate of 1928. However, there were Ghanaian soldiers who were part of the Gold Coast Constabulary who, together with personnel from Southern

attention to a patient. All in all, I’ve lived a full life and contributed the best to the places I found myself. I invested in my nation and invested in my children. In all I have lived by “hearing and doing” the Word.

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

As I contemplate the future for Africa, I have to say it is going to get worse before it gets better. In many ways, our leaders have not worked with the poor in mind. For instance, they have not built with the poor in mind. Moving forward there is a lot of misinformation in our country’s history that needs to be corrected. There is the place of Kwame Nkrumah in the story of Ghana, for example. I somewhat agree with Ali Mazrui who says Nkrumah was a great African but not a great Ghanaian. And in many ways, the way the history has been narrated leaves out much that would offer us a more textured portrait of Nkrumah, especially his interaction with the opposition. Most of the opposition had invited him, and in a sense sent him a mandate for independence at the soonest possible time, which he ignored and demanded “Independence now.” What happens with a nation that demands independence when it is not fully ready with the resources for self-governance? What does it mean to account for the atrocities against the many who worked tirelessly for what we would become? I think of Arku Korsah, Akuffo Addo, and Van Lare, who were punished in those days for freeing people who were accused of plotting Nkrumah’s assassination? How do we learn from such history moving forward?

As an educator, I think we lost our way in many ways, including in our education. The purpose of a university, our highest centers of learning, is three things: a) obtain new knowledge, b) revamp old knowledge, and c) impact the future. We need to attend to these in earnest if we are to be the nation we should be and create the kind of citizens that would benefit a nation.

## What are your dreams and hopes for the Church in Africa? If you were to return to this continent one hundred years from now, what would you hope to find? What would you fear you might find?

This is a question I need to ponder so I can speak more objectively. But from what I see now, with uneducated people who claim ordination from Jesus Christ and occupy pulpits and say all sorts of things, it is disheartening. We hear a lot of talk; much of it means nothing. Faith without works, as James says, is dead; real faith cannot be without works. Fake faith, as I’ve come to see it, is braggadocious because it cannot show works, as we see with so many these days.

medical doctor, and my work in public service. I recall the pleasure I felt in being nominated to the Spartan Club at the University of Edinburgh where I played hockey. In my third year, I became captain of the team by a unanimous vote, a position which I occupied for two years. This was the highest honor the University Sporting Club can bestow on people who excel in the field of sports. To be adjudged alumnus of the year in 1996 by my alma mater for my contributions to medicine in the Congo as well as for medical education in Ghana I count among my notable achievements.

My contributions to education in Ghana, not just as one-time Commissioner of Education and Health, but also the various ways I contributed to the educational life of the country and beyond by serving on various committees to ensure educational integrity—what I call a teaching life—I’m most proud of. Then, of course, is the honor of being decorated with the Star of Ghana, the highest honor in the land. In my public service, I had the opportunity to speak up for justice and peace and to stave off the public persecution and killings during the AFRC rule in Ghana. But all that is nothing compared to the fact that at the dusk of my life, I can still help guide and teach others. Sometimes, I can impart knowledge and at least inculcate some intellectual curiosity in the nursing assistants who care for me at home, which is very satisfying. I find that younger medical professionals still seek me out for insights at critical moments in their career, especially in testy moments in which their need for better conditions is being weighed against their Hippocratic Oath. It is quite an achievement when I am able to let at least a few understand that always they are first doctors and ought to never go on strike while on the job.

### Do you have any regrets?

I have no regrets. I have lived a full life with many years behind me. I lived within my means and was happy with my pension. I built a house within my means with no loans and worked with joy. God gave me a worthy partner in Leonora, my wife who supported my endeavors. I remember when I was first posted to a hospital in Northern Ghana. I said it was too far, and the posting officer asked me, “Far from where?” The Dutch travelled miles to go there, and I was trying to resist it. One has always to think of giving back to the taxpayer. I would have missed a good opportunity.

I learned many wonderful lessons along the years of being a doctor, which I pass on to younger doctors. One clear lesson is this—“Whatever happens, do not leave patients on the ward.” In fact, when it comes to patients, there are two sides of Dr. Evans-Anfom, as staff came to learn. There is the soft spoken nice one and the one who would be angry and call you out for lack of proper

marriage. He felt his daughter was unsafe living in army barracks surrounded by soldiers and moving frequently, so he came and took her home, effectively dissolving this marriage. She subsequently married Opanyin Kwabena Frimpong who, like Afua Kuma, was also a cocoa farmer. They moved down the mountain from Obo to the community of Asempanye Atuobikrom to continue farming.

Together they had six more children, as well as a set of twins who died at birth. This was certainly an incredibly busy season of Afua Kuma’s life, though the challenges did not end as her children grew up. The family recounted a deeply troubling event with her third-born son, Joseph Ofori (b. 1933). He worked as a driver for the Minister of Education for a time during Kwame Nkrumah’s presidency (between 1957–1966). At one point, a bomb was planted on the Minister’s car, but exploded when Joseph was not in the vehicle. Because of this, he was detained on suspicion of conspiring to kill the Minister. This was during a period in which some of those who were detained were not seen again, so Joseph’s situation was a matter of deep distress to his mother and family.

This was an important moment for Afua Kuma in terms of her faith and prayer life. She stood firm in her belief that God would deliver her son and said she would “fight with Jesus” on his behalf, through prayer and fasting. She challenged God, saying, “If you could get Joseph out of jail in Egypt [Genesis 39–41], you can get my son out too!” Finally, another son, Emmanuel, was able to free his brother, who fled to the USSR for eighteen years before returning home. We see some aspects of this ordeal reflected in her praises when she says:

If you are in trouble with the government,  
you go and tell Jesus.  
When you reach the court  
they will say,  
“Go back home!”  
No one will question you;  
you won’t have to say a word.  
I’m going to tell Jesus about it:  
today my Husband is a lawyer –  
how eloquent he is!<sup>20</sup>

Afua Kuma’s family home in Obo-Kwahu still holds some of the Russian art, music, and ephemera that Joseph brought back with him—an important

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Nigeria, fought in the East Africa Campaign in WWI (1914–18), which would plausibly fit with the dates and with some of the above details that the family recalled.

<sup>20</sup> Afua Kuma, 43.

reminder of some of the more cosmopolitan aspects of her life.

Afua Kuma's husband died in 1961. After his death, she was asked whether she intended to marry again. According to custom, this decision was entirely hers to make. She chose to remain unmarried and the remaining quarter-century of her life proved to be a highly productive and creative period. Firstly, she decided to train as a Traditional Birth Attendant (midwife), an occupation at which she excelled. And significantly, it was in this new season that she first began publicly offering her extraordinary praises and travelling within Ghana to perform at various Christian events. After fulfilling her responsibilities as daughter, wife, and mother, this season of independence offered her new opportunities, and she seems to have really come into her own as an artist and theologian, drawing from her rich life experiences to shape her poetic theological reflections.

### Church Affiliations

The variety of her church affiliations holds particular significance. In the small body of research on her, she is only identified as a member of the Church of Pentecost. Yet, as research and her own introduction reveal, this is only one part of the picture. She grew up in the Presbyterian Church, where her father was an elder, and it is likely here that she received her early grounding in Scripture. However, when she moved to Atuobikrom, there was not a Presbyterian church nearby, so she joined a Catholic church for several years. While she is often described as being "Pentecostal," she in fact only joined the Church of Pentecost (CoP) later in her life. Her daughter Elizabeth was married to Apostle Nartey, and it was through them that she joined the CoP. Her self-introduction references this connection.

According to her family, she really admired the CoP and felt it was a very "modern" institution. She admired their European dress and their use of English. It was partly because of this that it was very important to her to send all her children and grandchildren to school or college, saddened that she had not had that opportunity herself. As her grandsons recalled, she liked to say that the CoP was "growing in glory!" While she received a warm welcome and ready platform in the CoP, her son-in-law was so well-known in the church that she could not rise above him. However, he gave her many opportunities to perform, and would often bring her along to church events. As her grandsons said, "She was always ready like a soldier," and "If you said we're going to do the work of the Lord, she'd even leave off eating and jump up immediately!"

While most scholars have honed in on her Pentecostal affiliation, it is

strict budget and saving as much as I could saw me through. But one has to learn this simplicity of life at an early age, and my years in Osu Salem, with its strict puritanical training supplemented by the liberalism of Achimota, gave me the balance I needed to cope.

One could also say that the transitioning between Ghana and the UK and back was difficult to navigate. There were the usual impediments of bureaucracy. After years of study, with less than adequate funding from the Colonial Office in Accra, I was hoping to return home to take up the position of a medical officer, and I was searching for a job. Initially, there was silence from the Colonial Office after I had written to apply for the post of medical officer. Then came the response that I would be offered a job only after I arrived home, and even then at the level of assistant medical officer or clinical assistant. I rejected that response outright and informed the Colonial Office that I would continue to work towards enrolling in the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons Examinations and also look for a job in Edinburgh. The expected response came immediately via telegram. I was to be appointed at the rank of medical officer, and a passage was being booked for me on the MV Apapa from Liverpool to Accra. I made a further request that the appointment be dated for the day of the start of my passage home, which was April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1950. I knew they were probably getting quite tired of me, but I received a prompt response agreeing to my request.

But one thing was for sure, and it was well phrased by one person at reception for my return home after a long journey and eight years abroad. My cousin, Mr. Jonas-Ridley Coleman, then Headmaster of Accra Bishops' Girls' School, reminded me of the stock from which I come, my heritage and upbringing, and the qualities I had cultivated from childhood to date, and he encouraged me never to forget my humble beginnings. He reminded me of my initial ambition to become a teacher and train as a catechist and later to become a minister of the Gospel. I was to view my being a doctor as a vocation, a calling I should view in the same way as if I were a minister. I would be serving people as I minister from my consultation room. I would, through my relationship with my patients, bring the sympathy care and achieve the same ends as if I were a minister of the Gospel. Above all, I was to put the needs of the patients before my desire for profit.

That was my watchword throughout my career, and those who know me can attest that I tried to keep this advice.

### What do you feel were your most significant accomplishments?

There are many things I have to celebrate, from sportsmanship, which I have already said teaches good life lessons, to the academic field, my calling as a



supporters of football today and even the players don't know the rules. If the referee makes a decision against you, you need to be able to understand that. You can transfer this way of understanding the rules of a game to public life. It is about sportsmanship. As a government we can't just be excited about and spend money supporting the football team without looking at the long-range goal of what is gained by the individuals and society that will learn to govern their lives by rules and expect to be governed by rules that work.

**I remember that you were in government at a point. What were you doing? How did you live your faith in your role?**

I was a member of the Council of State in Liman's government. Here, as in other facets of my life, I lived my faith visibly. Just as Jesus said, let your light shine before men so they may glorify your father who is in heaven, or put another way, brighten the corner where you are. Sometimes you may be the only one around. I was always quick to explain things to people in a way that will help them understand and apply it. Whatever I know, I'm happy to share. An intentional teaching life.

**Considering your age—ninety-nine years old—did you meet any of the early missionaries of the Basel Mission?**

Well, there were people like Opoku and Asante, Karl Reindorf, E.B Freeman. All those with Christianity in various forms and focus. And then they made their contributions together under difficult circumstances. For example, in the Presbyterian Church in the early mission days, many were dying, and many lie in cemeteries in Akropong and Abokobi. Andrea Riis is the one who survived in Akropong and tried to convert the inhabitants. The chief, Akropong Hene, told him, "Bring me a Blackman who is a Christian, and I will then encourage my people to become Christians." So, Riis brought Black people from the West Indies. These were the Clarkes, the Swanikers, the Anthesons. My second Headmaster at Osu Salem was from the West Indies, the descendant of a Clarke. Today we may forget the history, but the faith lives on.

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

In terms of career, I became primarily a medical doctor, then the Vice Chancellor of a University, a Commissioner of Education, and a recipient of many awards for public service. But there were financial challenges from the beginning which could easily have derailed my educational aspirations. That challenge would continue into medical school in England. Living frugally on a

helpful to note that Afua Kuma is equally viewed as "one of ours" among several Roman Catholic communities in Ghana. When her family held a memorial celebration for her in 2018, it started in the Catholic church near her home, with some joining from the CoP. When the celebration moved to the CoP, some from the Catholic church came along. Likewise, when I visited a Catholic mission in Kwahu Tafo, several elderly female parishioners shared stories of how they had encountered Afua Kuma at various Catholic celebrations and been inspired by her to offer their own praises publicly. They recalled fondly that she worked with them to train girls and young women in this art. In an interview with their priest, Fr. Henry Duah, he observed that she "unknowingly promoted ecumenism and brought people together; her efforts have helped to promote unity today between Roman Catholics and others." He went on to explain that "in those days" – the 1960s and 70s – "it was very strict; no drums in [the Catholic] church! One man almost died of an asthma attack when drums were first used in the Catholic church. Afua Kuma was ahead of her time culturally!"<sup>21</sup>

**The Emergence of Her Praises**

There are different accounts regarding the date and circumstances of her first praises, likely reflecting people's differing memories about this period. Her grandsons Tetteh and Ofori estimated her first public praises as being between 1969 and 1979.<sup>22</sup> However, her praises were first tape-recorded in 1976, which means that she must have begun towards the earlier part of this date-range, since her gift was widely enough known by 1976 for someone to have drawn this to Fr. Kofi's attention.<sup>23</sup> One familiar account of how she began giving her praises is that she heard a sermon about "giving thanks in all circumstances" and responded in praise:

When the preacher invited people in the congregation to pray at the end of the sermon, Madam Kuma astounded everyone when she burst out in praise of Jesus in a language so powerful, and unknown in the church. In the words of [her daughter] Beatrice Fantoaa, "from that day God gave my mother a new tongue to praise Him."<sup>24</sup>

In Akosua Anyidoho's research, this event was tied to an account of two of her

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Fr. Henry Duah, Divine Word Missionary, Kwahu Tafo, May 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Afua Kuma's family members, May 2018, Atuobikrom, Ghana.

<sup>23</sup> Anon., 'Style in *Kwaebirentuu Ase Yesu*,' unpublished paper, n.d., n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Anyidoho, "Techniques of Akan Praise Poetry in Christian Worship," 73.

sons going through a very recalcitrant period and experiencing important life changes related to joining the Church of Pentecost.

However, in interviews with members of her community, several suggested to me that she first performed these oral praises during a Corpus Christi celebration and was subsequently invited to other Catholic events. Although the details of exactly how and when she first began performing her praises are lacking, it seems safe to suggest that she had long enjoyed the beauty and complexity of her Twi mother tongue, and had a strong poetic gifting. She also had an active personal prayer life, and at some point, recognized the adaptability and creative potential of the chiefly praise format (*amoma*) for Christian worship and gained the confidence to share her gifts more publicly.

It is helpful to consider the style of her praises, which share certain characteristics with traditional Akan chiefly praises, but which equally are her own unique creation. The original audio recordings, though not of excellent quality, help us to hear the rapid pace and musical quality of these spoken, poetic prayers, which Archbishop Sarpong describes as “deep words.”<sup>25</sup> Afua Kuma herself seems to indicate an awareness of doing something new when she says,

Shall we hear a new kind of praise?

We carried precious gifts to Him  
—to give to the child Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of categorizing these praises, there are four distinct styles of Twi orature, including: *adehye kasa* (speech style of the elders); *obuo* or *opo kasa* (courteous or polite speech); *mmea kasa* (speech style of women); and *mpanyin kasa* or *kasa a emu do* (speech style of elders, or language that is deep). The latter “is considered the most important kind of speech style among the Twi speaking people. It consists of the use of proverbs and parables (*mmebusem*); by-names (*mmeran*); appellations (*abodin*); and metaphors of all sorts. It is considered the language that every ‘cultured’ or ‘educated’ speaker of Twi should understand and use.”<sup>27</sup> He further explains that this is the language used in public settings, and emphasizes that the proper use of such language is viewed as an art. “It is taken for granted that they [women] also understand and use the speech style of the elders. The difference is that they are not often called upon or expected to speak

**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?**

I remember at age four a significant event. My grandfather asked me if I knew the meaning of my name Emmanuel. He explained that it meant “God with us.” That baffled me quite a bit since I had been made to believe that God was everywhere. Why were some particular people then singled out for the presence of God and not others? While I did not understand the entire explanation offered by my grandfather that day, the point that God was with me stuck. I always knew that, wherever I was and whatever I did, God was with me.

I was raised Presbyterian and, as you know, Presbyterians are the fountain of discipline. The kind of discipline I received both at home and from my teachers during my years at Osu Salem formed the bedrock of how I have conducted my life. Christianity, I was taught, was a way of life, and I tried to make it my way of life everywhere I was. I lived the scripture which tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. It was not just about obedience to scripture but also about the integrity of hard work. I feel, at UST<sup>46</sup> for example, because of my Christian way of life, the integrity of hard work was an ethos that guided how I approached my work and expected the school to function. It became my way of life.

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

One saying that is not in the scriptures, which also guided my life and work and interaction with those with whom I worked, and as I quoted in the introduction to my book, is what Lincoln said: “As I would not be a slave; so, I will not be master.” I don’t want to be anybody’s slave, and I don’t want anybody to be my slave. And in a way it started from Salem. The hierarchical structure which many might resist today was a well of wisdom. You started by obeying orders and then continue by giving orders. And it made you understand more what Lincoln said. This idea was followed in Achimota. Achimota was a leveling ground. Achimota didn’t care where you came from. I played hockey; hockey taught you that you were not just playing a game, because it was a game with rules. As a player, you should know the rules as well as the referee. So many

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Archbishop Peter Sarpong, Kumasi, June 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Unpublished praises, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Anon., “Style in Kwaebirentuw Ase Yesu,” unpublished paper, n.d., n.p.

<sup>46</sup> This is the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, named for the founder and first President of the Republic of Ghana. It is the first indigenous university in Ghana and primarily focused not on the Liberal Arts but on Technical and Practical education, with the aim of enhancing industry and technology in Ghana. Over time, it has become increasingly an institution for the humanities and social sciences as well.

## Interview of Dr. Emmanuel Evans-Anfom

By Dr. Esther Acolatse

*Conducted in Ghana between December 2018 and January 2019*

*Dr. Emmanuel Evans-Anfom is a renowned surgeon and a noted educational leader in Ghana, having served as Vice Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology, and Chairman, National Education Commission in Ghana.*

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

I was born on October 7, 1919, at the Evans Family House on High Street, Accra, to William Quarshie Anfom of Accra, of part Shai and Nzema origins, and to Mary Emma Evans, the daughter of William Timothy Evans, a catechist with the Basel Mission and the son of a Welsh trader. William Evans, my maternal grandfather become the second headmaster of the Basel Mission Middle School (now Osu Salem) and later a tutor and housemaster at the Mission Seminary in Akropong. My maternal grandmother, Emma Evans, came from the Reindorf family, a descendant of Carl Christian Reindorf. I later attended the same Basel Mission School and then went on to Achimota School.

At Osu Salem, with its Presbyterian ethos, I received a holistic education—education that was geared to the whole person. There was emphasis on working with one's hands as well and seeing the honor in that. Physical labor was nothing to be ashamed of.

### **Where did you grow up? What were the circumstances of your upbringing?**

I was born and grew up in the Evans Family House before starting school. My father was a produce cocoa buyer and worked for a few years at Mangoase and Prako, so I would spend short periods there with my parents and elder brother, Joe. At my grandfather's retirement in 1912, we settled in Mampong-Akwapem, but I spent time shuttling between my home in Accra and Mampong. When we lived in Accra, visits to my grandfather's home, Beula in Mampong, hold fond memories for me. Beyond the opportunity to play with my brother and cousins, we had the chance to meet numerous august visitors including ministers from the Basel mission. Grandfather would line us up and give us a sort of Bible quiz, knowing full well we were well versed in the Bible stories. Such experiences helped form in me an early the desire to become a teacher.

on public occasions.”<sup>28</sup> Significantly, Afua Kuma used the speech style of the elders; and as such, was equally celebrated for her linguistic as well as theological abilities. As Kofi Opoku said, “I cannot emphasize to you strongly enough how much we love our Twi language and those who use it well!”<sup>29</sup>

### **Gift or Ability?**

There has been some discussion surrounding whether her linguistic and spiritual abilities should be seen as a “gift” or rather as a “skill” that she developed. When Anyidoho interviewed Beatrice Fantoaa, the latter “emphasized that her mother never watched traditional appellation performances nor rehearsed her praises, and that she claimed divine inspiration for her creative talent.”<sup>30</sup> Anyidoho, however, suggests that she may have “unconsciously internalized the grammar of *amoma*, and used that knowledge to create a form suitable in Christian worship.”<sup>31</sup> When I interviewed the family, her grandson Tetteh recalled often hearing her reciting under her breath; but in his words, “when the kids would say, ‘What was that? What did you say?’ she’d simply say, ‘Oh don’t mind me!’”

Archbishop Peter Sarpong, on the other hand, was adamant about the importance of recognizing her ability as a gift. In his words,

Within oral tradition, don’t underestimate the power of *gift*! ...Gifts aren’t subject to analysis. Think of gifted mathematicians, or sports figures – it’s not always that we should explain things by way of environment or training. It’s not at all impossible that this woman from the bush comes out with this. The important thing is to acknowledge the gift – this woman has a *gift*!<sup>32</sup>

What is unanimously agreed upon by those who have studied the linguistic composition of her prayers at length is that while she may have taken inspiration from the chiefly praise format and may have rehearsed her poetic offerings, her praises are unique and should indeed be classified as a gift.

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<sup>28</sup> See Anyidoho, “Techniques of Akan Praise Poetry in Christian Worship,” 73, and Anon., “Style in Kwaebirentuw Ase Yesu,” unpublished paper, n.d., n.p. For further detailed discussion on the style of Afua Kuma’s praises, Anyidoho and Anon. are excellent sources.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, February 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Anyidoho, 75.

<sup>31</sup> Anyidoho, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Archbishop Peter Sarpong, Kumasi, June 2018.

Archbishop Sarpong noted that her prayers differ somewhat from those expressed within Akan indigenous religion. In his words, “these prayers center on one historical Christian figure, Jesus Christ – that’s not too normal for us.” As Sarpong further described it,

She composed them; she had a vision because she was a Christian – she uses ritualistic language, based on her Christian beliefs and ideas... In Akuapem Twi, the words are “big words” – but they appear to me to be words that describe the Christian mystery she’s trying to portray. Some expressions are not traditional; some are coined, and flow from her beliefs. But while her symbols are perfectly symbolic of our tradition, many would not be used in normal religious situations.

He further elaborates, noting that her depiction of “Jesus like a basket you can fill with water, Jesus as a warrior...the immensity of Jesus, his ability to destroy the enemy, whatever that is... these are wonderful and very new. I’m not used to that!” His conclusion was that “for her to do this is like a miracle to me – I don’t know where she’d get these words – it’s really wonderful!”

Kofi Asare Opoku, an authority on African indigenous religion and Akan Language, had the chance to hear Afua Kuma perform her praises.<sup>33</sup> He echoes Archbishop Sarpong’s words: “Her abilities were incredible – she produced these praises effortlessly! A master of the language – her images were just stunning! She opened her mouth and out flowed a torrent of beautiful language!”<sup>34</sup> He shed further light on the gift vs. skill debate by explaining that in Akan culture, if you encounter something special, such as a unique ability or exceptional talent and you ask the person, “Where did you learn how to do this?” the traditional Akan response is, “I was born with it, *yede woo me*.” As Opoku elaborated, “In our way, with such exceptional genius, the origin always resides in the spirit world – as in, ‘born with it.’ When I met Afua Kuma, it was clear she was ‘born with it,’ no one could have taught her this. Her imagery was absolutely stunning. I couldn’t describe it otherwise.”

She gained a reputation for her incredible gift, and was regularly invited to a wide variety of Christian events and festivals to perform. As her grandsons recalled, “If it had something to do with Jesus, she would even put down what

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<sup>33</sup> Kofi Asare Opoku was formerly Associate Professor of Religion and Ethics at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon; and is retired Professor of Religious Studies at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, February 4, 2018.

Your gospel reaches earth's ends.  
You are a Very Great River,  
which no bar of sand can oppose.<sup>45</sup>

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Members of Afua Kuma's family, Atuobikrom, Ghana, May 2018.  
Fr. Henry Kwaku Duah, Divine Word Missionary, Kwahu Tafo, May 2018.  
Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, (by telephone), February 2018.  
Archbishop Emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Kumasi, June 2018.

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<sup>45</sup> Unpublished praises, 21.

she was eating to go!" Additionally, when churches advertised their upcoming events in newspapers, they began to include her name as a feature attraction, and this is how some people heard about her.<sup>35</sup>

## Her Role as a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA)

She started her work as a traditional birth attendant in 1961, the year her husband died. A TBA received no formal training but, as was the practice, she apprenticed herself to an older, experienced midwife. These experienced TBAs called her to come and assist, and gradually she learned. She took over as the older women retired and, in turn, she trained other younger women. She received further training in 1984, when the Catholic Sisters at the Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church (est. 1975) held Mother and Child Welfare training clinics.

She was particularly well known for her expertise in dealing with difficult deliveries. As her daughter-in-law Jane, also a TBA, recalled, upon arriving at a birth, Afua Kuma would first wash her hands and then get down on her knees in fervent prayer, asking God to protect the mother and child, to guide the process, and bring them all through successfully. Only after praying would she start engaging with the mother. As she exclaims in one prayer, "When you heed the things of God, you need not wear an amulet to make your marriage fruitful. A woman is struggling with a difficult labor, and suddenly all is well. The child, placenta and all, come forth without an operation. He is the Great Doctor!"<sup>36</sup>

Rachel, a TBA who apprenticed with Afua Kuma, recalled that the most important lesson she learned from Afua Kuma was that one should not charge a fee for midwifery services, as she felt that this was in some way taking advantage of one's neighbor in her hour of need. If families wanted to give gifts of appreciation, it was up to them, but she did not want anyone to go without the necessary care due to poverty. Rachel, still practicing as a TBA, continues that tradition.

## Healing/Prayer Ministry

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<sup>35</sup> Prof. Opoku indicated that this was how he first became aware of her, and suggested that I look for articles and advertisements on her in the *Christian Messenger* (Presbyterian Church), *Methodist Time*; and the *Catholic Voice*. I was not successful in locating these archives, but if someone were able to locate some of these articles/advertisements, it might provide additional insight into how Afua Kuma was perceived, how widely she ministered in Ghana (both geographically and ecumenically), and the range of dates of her ministry.

<sup>36</sup> Afua Kuma, 14.

Another important story that her family shared was of a mother who brought her small daughter, Rebekah, to Afua Kuma for prayer. The little girl had died, and the mother had already taken her to two different fetish priests. These priests each had declared her dead and said they could not do anything to help her. In desperation, she brought the little girl to Afua Kuma, who, together with her son Emmanuel, daughter Janet, and Emmanuel's wife Jane, all prayed over the child. Afua Kuma had a large sheep in her yard, and they suddenly heard a loud noise. They went outside to investigate and discovered that the sheep had fallen over dead, while in the same moment, the little girl was resurrected! They still call her "Resurrected Rebekah." I met her as we walked through the family's neighborhood!

This was not an isolated incident. Many people came to her for healing prayer, and on other occasions she went and prayed for those who were in the hospital. Afua Kuma felt this was another dimension of her prayers. When I asked if she would have considered this a healing ministry, her family said no; it was just an extension of her prayer ministry. Archbishop Sarpong suggested that the idea of a "healing ministry" is more of a modern Christian idea. Because Akan culture has a long history of healing practices it would have been natural for her to consider healing as simply an extension of her prayer life.

### **Conflict with the Fetish Priest and Accusation of Witchcraft**

Afua Kuma's family shared several accounts of serious conflicts she encountered with the local Tigare priest who accused her of witchcraft. She had experienced a number of family difficulties: several of her children had faced health challenges and, in a short space of time, two of her brothers died quite suddenly. In her Akan context, sudden deaths and illnesses often raised questions about witchcraft. Such accusations were (and are) frequently directed at older women in the community and are very serious, carrying the threat of death or the possibility of expulsion from family and community. Her family explained that, at that time, if you were accused of witchcraft, you would be taken to the Akonedi Shrine and compelled to participate in a kola nut ordeal. Two kola nuts would be placed on the shrine, one of which would be poisoned. The priest would accuse you, you would deny the charge, and have to eat one nut. If you were a witch, it was believed that you would die instantly. If you did not die, you would be free.

One of her uncles was a prophet in the True Faith Church. During this time, he directed Afua Kuma to "declare the name of Jesus"—not necessarily in formal prayers but just the name on its own—a theme seen again and again in

Afua Kuma's daughter Elizabeth died in 1987 in a tragic car accident, and her family said that this was the beginning of the end for her. She had especially loved Elizabeth because of the CoP connection, and saw her daughter as someone important, with a beautiful home and significant opportunities. Her family felt she never recovered after the tragic accident that claimed her favorite daughter's life. During this same time, she had a small car accident herself. Though she was not seriously injured, she never recovered fully after this and was in and out of hospital. On a Thursday morning seven months after Elizabeth's death, Afua Kuma died and was buried in Obo-Kwahu.

As Kofi Opoku observed,

Here was a lady from the forest with such pearls of wisdom – where is this coming from? My goodness! This didn't come from the African theologians! This came from outside theological "respectability" – but surpasses it! So many ways of talking about God, about Jesus... we have a proverb [in Twi]: "Truth [or Wisdom or Knowledge] is like a baobab tree: one person's arms can't embrace it."... If we are to succeed in surrounding the baobab tree, we must hold hands – Afua Kuma offers us one hand to grasp, and her view of Jesus enables us to see Jesus in a new way.<sup>44</sup>

One observer repeatedly emphasized how deeply Afua Kuma loved Jesus. In his words, "I have never known anyone else, before or after, who loved Jesus in the profound and all-encompassing way that Afua Kuma loved Him." Her family readily assisted with this research, delighted for people in other parts of the world to come to know their mother and grandmother, and to derive as much joy and encouragement from her praises as they still do. However, they emphasized that her desire was never for her words to draw attention to herself but to point people to Jesus, in the hope that they might experience Him as she had experienced Him:

You are the Precious Kente cloth  
and the Colorful Dutch wax-prints.  
You brighten our celebrations.  
We love and admire Your beauty,  
and Your name we spread abroad...  
You are Lord of Travelers!

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, February 2018.

In some of her prayers, we can certainly see allusions to various aspects of indigenous religious practices, but it is always to come back and point to Jesus as the greater, stronger, source of power, provision, and joy: “Our ancestors didn’t know of *Onyankopon*: the great God. They served lesser gods and spirits, and became tired. But as for us, we have seen holy men, and prophets. We have gone to tell the angels how Jehovah helped us come this far: with great gratitude we come before Jesus, the one who gives us everlasting life.”<sup>42</sup> While it may be tempting to see in this rather negative-sounding view on Akan religious heritage an underlying “western” or “missionary” perspective, that did not seem to be the case. Again, her family emphasized that because she had found herself on the rather terrifying end of some of these practices, she wanted to protect herself and her family from possible harm but at the same time, she honored and esteemed her Akan heritage, with its religious cosmologies, through the very medium of her prayers.

### A Woman of Wisdom and Strength

While being recognized as a “simple woman” in terms of her lifestyle, she was equally known as a woman of great wisdom and bravery, small but mighty in spirit. Her family nicknamed her “Afua Kuma Yaa Asantewaa” after the great Asante warrior queen (1840–1921), who led the war of the Golden Stool. Her grandsons said that they saw her as a warrior and a woman of wisdom—wisdom to settle cases. People came to her to make decisions, to receive family counselling, to influence court decisions, to receive prayer/healing, or to get advice or training for birth attendants. Her house was busy! They also said that if one of them misbehaved, she was quick to put them in line. Certainly the image of “warrior” is fitting when we consider her ordeals with the witchcraft accusations, or “fighting with Jesus” in prayer for her son Joseph’s freedom. People also saw her as a woman of integrity and justice. The chief in her village asked her to sit with him to hear cases and to offer her insights, and the local Catholic priest directed all of his counselling cases to her.<sup>43</sup> As one grandson recalled, “She had ‘deep wisdom,’” and liked to say, “Let your conscience be your judge and your heart reflect it.”

### Details of Her Death

<sup>42</sup> Afua Kuma, 30.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with the family, May 2018.

her prayers. Her uncle suggested that if she prayed in this way, the one causing the problems would reveal him or herself. So Afua Kuma did this, and went around just declaring “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus...” During this period, one night an unfamiliar neighbor woman came and heard Afua Kuma saying the name Jesus. She left immediately, and straightaway the children’s health improved! Therefore, the community believed that this woman, not Afua Kuma, was responsible for these illnesses.

In a related account, pertaining to the unexpected death of her brothers (and possibly also her children’s illnesses), the Tigare priest came to see her several times to challenge her to a kola nut ordeal, again charging her with witchcraft.<sup>37</sup> Afua Kuma, however, refused to go. She believed that God would vindicate her and so spent time praying fervently. Finally, the priest lost patience and came and said he would kill her within seven days if she did not face the ordeal. Afua Kuma boldly said that seven days was too short a time for him to prepare and said he should instead take his time and prepare very well and take forty days in order to get the job done well. But, she warned, if after forty days she was not dead, everyone would know he did not have power to kill her and that she was innocent. She said, “Even if I die on the forty-first day, they will know it was not you that caused it!” She told him that if she died, he should take a piece of her cloth to bring to his house as a souvenir to show that he had killed her. During this time, she stopped reciting her prayers publicly, but committed herself to fervent private prayer.

The forty days passed and no harm came to her, and she began reciting her praises publicly once again. As she declared joyfully, “Jesus will come when you call; from very far he hears you!” and “Jesus! You say it once and the matter is settled; in all the world, you have the final say!”<sup>38</sup> Again and again in her praises, we find this theme of the power of speaking the name of Jesus.

Needless to say, the fetish priest was angry. Sometime later, Afua Kuma was travelling by train to Cape Coast and saw the priest, Kweku Ofori. She said to him, “I’m sick just now but if I die, it’s not you who did it, you couldn’t kill me!” He was embarrassed and tried to give her some money to cover over his offence, but she refused it and said, “If your ways are perfect, the Lord will make your way straight and make your enemies flee before you!”<sup>39</sup> As she recounted in a later prayer, “My enemies say they will kill me, but Jesus is the Chief of Police,

<sup>37</sup> It was not clear in the recounting whether the accusations of witchcraft came at separate times or during one period.

<sup>38</sup> Afua Kuma, 32.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with the family, May 2018, Atuobikrom, Ghana.

and my enemies have fled, leaving me in peace.”<sup>40</sup>

Her family shed a little more light on this process, saying that her brothers had been quite wealthy and that Afua Kuma was in line to inherit some money from them. They explained that once the fetish priest had killed you, your family would not bury you, but would put your body on the shrine for your body to rot. The fetish priest would then ask for the gold and cloth in the house, saying, “It has witchcraft in it.” The priest knew that Afua Kuma had money. The family said that this was likely his motivation for persecuting her so harshly. Again, we cannot underestimate the serious and distressing nature of an accusation of witchcraft in Afua Kuma’s context. And, by understanding the severity of this accusation, we are more fully able to see her incredible boldness in defying the Tigare priest, as well as her deep her faith in Christ her defender, protector, and vindicator. Such insights add further depth and color to our understanding of her praises.

### Philanthropy

Afua Kuma was also remarkable in her charitable giving and humble lifestyle. Her family shared many stories to illustrate this. Her grandson Tetteh said that as a child during a big event in their community, he had found a large amount of money on the ground and brought it to her to keep for him, since no one nearby was asking about it. When he came back later to collect the money, she was a bit evasive about it, and he eventually discovered that she had gone door to door searching for the owner of the missing money and had returned it! As he said, there was no *gong gong* sounding, no one raising an alarm that they had lost it.<sup>41</sup> No one even realized it. She just took it upon herself to go door to door until she located the rightful owner. Tetteh was so mad at losing out on this “found fortune” that he made his grandmother sell a sheep to repay him, a request which she cheerfully indulged.

Other family members described her as a generous provider, saying that she might take ten of the grandchildren or neighborhood children to the farm with her to help carry loads back, but would direct them to take about 80% of it to her neighbors who were perhaps in need, with only a little bit coming back to her own home. She never took money for it. Also, she would not take money from churches after she performed, and she often added her own money to the offering to raise money for missions or other community needs. In fact, Tetteh

recalled that churches were always excited to have her, because her performances would encourage people to give generously (in the tradition of putting money on the altar as an expression of appreciation for outstanding performances).

As previously noted, she would not charge a fee for her midwifery services. She also refused to take any payment when he invited her to come and share praises, although she received with delight small gifts which he sometimes brought for her, such as a scarf or a necklace. For all her various philanthropic and business dealings, her family smiled to recall that the “bank” where she kept her money was under the banana tree in her yard, where she buried it.

While many of those whom I interviewed who had known her referred to her as a “simple woman,” they clarified that this should not be mistaken for either a statement about her intelligence or her social/financial status. Rather, they said, it was a statement that indicates that while she could have chosen to live more comfortably, or to think highly of her significant accomplishments, she carried all of these things lightly and considered her donations of time, skills, and finances simply as ways in which she honored God.

Her grandsons also clarified that “when she talked about ‘prosperity,’ she meant ‘all is well with my whole family,’” closer to the meaning of the Hebrew “shalom” than the material prosperity we perhaps think of more quickly, and more superficially. They gave as an example this unpublished prayer of hers: “Generous God, you are the one I’ve depended on, and my life is well; I have prospered.” Again, such insight gives us a much deeper and richer perspective on her prayers. While she certainly expresses gratitude to God as the source of her material provision and daily needs, her “prosperity” runs much deeper than that.

### Her Views on African Indigenous Religion

One unexpected aspect that emerged from this research was her strong view on African Indigenous Religion. As her family recalled, she took a very firm stand against traditional religious practices and would not let her grandchildren go out to socialize or to attend cultural dances because she felt it was associated with “fetish.” She had had traumatic experiences with traditional practices at various points in her life. First, as a teenager, she had seen a dead body put on a fetish altar with chickens pecking at it, so she never again ate chicken. And as we have seen, later in life she herself had some very distressing encounters with witchcraft accusations. Her family emphasized that her negative views of “fetish” were rooted in her own experiences as opposed to coming from external sources. They said that one reason for her deep appreciation for the CoP was because they agreed with her strict views on indigenous religious practices.

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<sup>40</sup> Afua Kuma, 18.

<sup>41</sup> A *gong gong* is an Akan instrument.