
THE INCULTURATION OF HOLY CHILD EDUCATION: ACTIONS NOT WORDS

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Abstract

This paper arises out of an oral history research project involving West African women in Nigeria and Ghana. It begins to examine the manner in which the educational philosophy of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus provided a religious education enabling the alumnae of its schools in Nigeria and Ghana to attain a liberated means of self-expression and leadership faithful to their cultural heritage as African women and their self-understanding and formation as Christians. Attention is given to the spirit that informed the education and the sociocultural context into which the first Holy Child schools were introduced in "South-East" [sic] Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

From 15 October 1995 to 15 October 1996 is the Jubilee year of celebration for the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in observance of its 150th anniversary as a religious community of women in the Catholic Church (Smith 1995, vii). Established in England in October 1846 by an American woman, Cornelia Peacock Connelly, to respond to the needs of the time through "the education of females of all classes" (Connelly 1846, 26), members of the Society now serve in areas of Europe, Africa and the Americas.

This research was proposed as part of the Society's Jubilee celebration. From the perspective of Christian missions and women's history, the experience of the indigenous churches to which the Society responded in the 1930s is worthy of record. Graduates of Holy Child schools in both Nigeria and Ghana are

known for the contribution they make to public life.¹ In West Africa their educational alumnae organization, known as the Holy Child Past Student Association (HOPSA), has an active membership in excess of 200 women in both Nigeria and Ghana. It was my conviction that it would be a valuable contribution to the African Church and to the history of women's education to hear and record the stories of some of these Holy Child alumnae, including accounts of their perceived influence of their education on them.

Thus, during a research leave in 1994 and with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, I traveled to Nigeria and Ghana to gather on-site oral interviews with alumnae of the Schools of the Holy Child Jesus in these two countries. Through their alumnae associations, these women for the most part chose among themselves who would participate in the research.

Since this research was concerned with the effect of a particular philosophy and praxis of education, the questions used in the genre of educational biography as developed by Lagemann (1978, 1) were helpful both in preparing the interview protocol and in interviewing the women. They included the following:

- How does she see herself?
- How is she seen by others?

And questions that deal specifically with education:

- What were the educationally significant influences throughout this woman's life?
- How were these educational and significant?
- What, if any, is the relationship between education and accomplishment?

One of my ongoing research interests (Bowman 1984) has been the relationship between the gospel vision (charism) of a religious congregation and its expression in the ministry of education. Building on the conceptualization of Randolph Crump Miller (1950, 1982), the charism of a religious congregation can be understood to provide the "theology-behind" the curriculum in the work of education (Bowman 1995). This perspective undergirded the research conducted in West Africa.

¹ These include women such as Francesca Yetunde Emanuel, the first female Nigerian administrative officer (1959), who became the first female permanent secretary (1975); and Her Honour Cecilia Korateng-Addo, one of three senior judges who were kidnapped and murdered during a period of civil unrest in Ghana in June 1982.

In an earlier article (Bowman 1993), "Women's Religious Education: Liberation or Socialization? A Case Study," I looked at the career of Cornelia Connelly to show how she worked within the strictures of the societal forces of Victorian England, pushing at the edges to implement a form of education liberating for women. Yet, as H.A. Alexander (1993) pointed out, the question must be asked "whether education with a predetermined end in view can truly be liberating, or whether religious education within a particular tradition and with specific commitments of doctrine or practice must always be merely socializing." This question will be pursued further in my analysis and theological reflection on the content of interviews.

THE SPIRIT OF HOLY CHILD EDUCATION²

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus began its work of education in West Africa in 1930. The Society brought with it an ethos and established philosophy of education developed by its founder, Cornelia Connelly, between 1846 and her death in 1879. In the story of Connelly's early life we find the roots of her approach to what became her lifework—the establishment of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and its ministry through education.

Cornelia and her husband, Pierce Connelly, first visited Rome in 1835 (Bowman 1984, Flaxman 1991). It was a happy time as the young couple discovered the riches of their newly found faith. A former Episcopalian priest, Pierce hoped to be ordained to the Catholic priesthood; Cornelia studied music and immersed herself in the cultural life afforded by this European center of Christendom. Catholic priesthood, however, was not an option for married men, and Pierce was advised to offer his service to the Church as a Roman Catholic layman. They returned to the United States and lived and worked as lay persons at Grand Coteau, Louisiana from 1838 to 1842.

Eight years later the story was very different. Pierce had preceded Cornelia to Rome—again in search of Holy Orders—but was asked to bring his wife and family from America for consultation with the Pope. Cornelia and Pierce, with two of their children, Frank and Adeline, arrived in Rome in December 1843

² Aspects of this article have been shared within the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in their private publication *Source*.

after a five-month journey for Cornelia and the children from Grand Coteau. Almost immediately Adeline became a boarding-school pupil with the Society of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità dei Monti—the community with whom Cornelia and the children had resided in Louisiana for thirteen months in Pierce's absence.

Cornelia was just thirty-four years old. Her eldest son, Mercer, was at school at Oscott in England; her two youngest children lay buried in the Jesuit cemetery at Grand Coteau. She could visit Adeline at the Trinità only once a week. Her husband sought their permanent separation; other family members were in America. Few of their Roman acquaintances knew the real purpose of their journey.

Today we are apt to comment on the level of stress in Cornelia's life. Amidst all the competing claims on her person we marvel at her stamina. How was she able to make sense of her life? What gave it meaning?

We know that Cornelia and Pierce met with Pope Gregory XVI before New Year's of 1843 regarding the possibility of their future separation—necessary at the time if Pierce were to become a Catholic priest. Early in March, before Pierce submitted his formal petition to the Pope, Cornelia made a laywomen's retreat at the Trinità.

During this retreat Cornelia's spiritual notebook (1844, 19–31) shows that she used the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius to reexamine the call to religious life she had experienced while still at Grand Coteau. She deals as realistically as she can with the competing claims of her family responsibilities. At the end she thanks God for the "light & strength" she has received in her retreat and responds in total commitment to God's will as she understands it.

Following the "contemplation to attain love" from the fourth week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (1964, 103), Ignatius counsels that "love ought to express itself in deeds rather than words." McCarthy (1986, 60–61) draws attention to how Cornelia concretizes what this means for her in her own life at this time, then moves to the implications for her life in relation to others. In her spiritual notebook (1846, 31), Cornelia concludes her reflections on her retreat with the commitment *Actions not Words*, a phrase from the classical literature of Rome, *Facta non Verba*. This personal motto was to become that of her Society.

To understand Cornelia's charism, her spirituality, the spirit of the Society she founded, or the spirit she nurtured through her

educational philosophy, it is necessary to reflect on how this maxim played out in her life and teaching.

From as early as the 1850s we find illustrations done by the pupils at the school at St. Leonards of the Society's emblem, emboldened with Cornelia's motto "Actions not Words," along the lower edge of their drawing books and "Society of the Holy Child Jesus" along the other two sides. This emblem and her use of the motto are found in the *Positio* documentation (vol. III, Plate XXXII; vol. II, 692). The emblem draws attention to Cornelia's response to the mystery of the incarnation in her own life. It was in contemplating this mystery that she had found consolation on the tragic death of her son John Henry at Grand Coteau when he was knocked into a vat of boiling sugar cane by a Newfoundland dog. In her spiritual notebook of that time, 1840, she writes: "Fell victim on Friday—suffered 43 hours & was taken 'into the temple of the Lord' on the [Feast of the] Purification" (1960, 5). Cornelia's faith was fostered by her friendship with God and nurtured by active participation in the *Spiritual Exercises* from the time of her first retreat with them in 1839. But at its heart is a simplicity in which she allows herself to love and be loved by God. It is the love of the incarnation and leads, as Johnson (1992) points out, to a love for all creation, a respect for God's self-revelation/communication wherever it is found, and the loving service of others.³

The strength of character which such practice molds—so important in the work of education—is a sense by individuals that such love finds expression in all of one's actions. This is the "spirit-behind" all Cornelia's educational enterprises. And, if one reads her carefully, one finds that she always fostered an attitude of intentionality—in one's thoughts, one's attitudes, one's endeavors—as she expressed in the maxim to her pupils, "Be yourself but make that self just what Our Lord wants it to be" (1983, 30).

There are a number of qualities that have come to be associated with the ethos of Holy Child education: the primacy of the spiritual, mutual trust, respect for the individual, develop-

³ Johnson discusses how the use of the female figure of Sophia as personified Wisdom in the person of Jesus "unties the knot of sexist Christology." This understanding brings to the fore our relation to the cosmos, our respect of other religious traditions, and our need for solidarity with the oppressed and suffering. This approach is, I believe, consonant with a contemporary Ignatian spirituality.

ment of one's gifts, a capacity for love, desire for truth, joy and happiness, an appreciation of beauty, a realistic outlook on life. Gompertz, Cornelia's first published biographer, records that Cornelia told her Holy Child sisters that in their work of education, "We have to learn to make strong women who, while they lose nothing of their gentleness and sweetness, should yet have a masculine force of character and will" (1922, 308). She was writing a new script for Victorian women based on her own life experience.⁴ Such women would become leaders in their society.

This legacy was not lost on the members of the Society who carried the Society's educational work to Nigeria in 1930.

THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Early on the first morning after my arrival in Nigeria, I was able to visit the National Museum at the Old Residency, Calabar. The early hour meant that there were not many visitors and I was free to roam at will. In one room I found the following information recorded in *The Story of Old Calabar: A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, Calabar* (1986, 192):

In 1930 three Catholic sisters, led by the American Cornelia Connelly, took an active interest in education work and by 1954 the 41 sisters were supervising three Teachers' Colleges, 4 secondary schools and 55 elementary schools in the area of the Old Calabar Province.

Though the facts were not quite correct (Cornelia Connelly had died in 1879), one knew that her spirit had found its way to Calabar!⁵

As noted above, the professional and educational achievements and contributions of Holy Child alumnae in Nigeria and Ghana are well known within these countries and are often commented upon both by national church people and by former missionaries. The purpose for my journey to Calabar was to meet and interview some of these alumnae in the region where the Society, along with other missionary groups, had begun its

⁴ Heilburn (1988, 60-750) develops the theme of how women in the twentieth century "have broken through to a realization of the narratives that have been controlling their lives." I suspect that Cornelia became quite aware of this in her own life.

⁵ The first Holy Child sisters to go to West Africa were Reverend Mother General Mary Amadeus and Reverend Mother Mary Geneviève who arrived in Calabar on 20 September 1930, followed by Mothers Mary Edith and Joachim of the English Province and Mother Mary Laurentia from the United States on 18 October.

work. The morning expedition provided an important historical context for what I was to hear.

EARLY MISSIONS

The Story of Old Calabar (1986, 178–181) traces the first missionary activity in southeastern Nigeria to the early nineteenth century, with the arrival of Jamaican Presbyterian missionaries of Scottish and African⁶ origin, representing the Church of Scotland, in the Old Calabar area. By 1892 the Wesleyan Methodists were centered at Oron; the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England established itself in the Niger Delta; and the Roman Catholics settled at Onitsha.

From the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, the Efik established relationships with Dutch, French, German and British traders, respectively, as they appeared. The Efik became the dominant indigenous trading group and controlled access to other ethnic groups in the hinterland. The openness of the rulers and chiefs of the port region of Old Calabar to the various mission boards named above was due to a desire for technological training. In return the indigenous people guaranteed land for mission settlements and protection, and they were willing to concede some of their traditions. A natural outgrowth of these missions was the work of education. By 1856, 200 children attended mission schools daily in Calabar. In fact, *The Story of Old Calabar* records:

The missionary penetration in South-Eastern Nigeria was a case of the cross (missions) leading the flag (British Colonial government) in the interior of the country, since the missionaries were the first foreigners allowed to settle on land. (1986, 178)

Motivated by the rich resources of the country, the British colonial authorities implemented a policy of “indirect rule” in 1901 in an effort to control the newly acquired hinterland.

The Efik chiefs and traders were not happy with this encroachment into their trading territories. Furthermore, the British hierarchical mode of governing was foreign to most of the ethnic groups of the southeast, where power was shared in the

⁶ This is evident from pictures of William and Louisa Anderson, missionaries who travelled from Jamaica to Nigeria in the 1840s. From photographs extant it is evident that Louisa Peterswald Anderson was of African and European descent although little is told of her except that she was known as “the silent woman” (Marwick, 1897, 193).

community. Nevertheless, the British established “native courts” made up of individuals appointed from among the local mission-educated men. Issued official certificates of recognition or “warrants,” they became known as “warrant chiefs.” This artificial institution superimposed on local tradition for the purpose of political consolidation by the British gave way to corruption and abuse.

The European missionaries and colonizers focused their attention on the evangelization and education of men, envisioning them as the future religious leaders and governmental aides. Most efforts by missionary women were directed at the marginalized—the mothers of twins, replaced women, orphans and slaves. At times they taught village women skills related to the care of the home and children.

But it is the women’s culture of southeastern Nigeria during this period that is so often overlooked.⁷ As an economic force women were extremely powerful. Not only were they the primary agricultural workers, but they also dominated trade and the local markets in many areas.

BRITISH EDUCATIONAL POLICY

In March 1925 a document entitled “Education Policy in British Tropical Africa” was adopted by the British Parliament for use by directors of education and missionary bodies. The work of an advisory committee on African education, it outlines the relationship between the needs of the colonizer and educational policy in all the British “Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories in East and West Africa, particularly the Gold Coast, Southern Nigeria and Uganda” (see under Secretary of State for the Colonies 1925, 2). Members of the advisory committee visited Africa in the process of developing education policy. There were, of course, no women on the committee. A cursory reading of the document leaves one unsure as to whether it is meant to apply equally to the education of females and males.

Two concerns motivate the document: the economic development of the British African Dependencies and “the fuller recog-

⁷ The National Museum provides an inclusive approach to the contribution of women to the region’s history. In other sources used for this article the perspective of women is sorely lacking. Michael Crowder (1968) thanks only male scholars for reading his work in preparation for publication although his book is considered an authoritative accounting by contemporary historians.

inition of the principle that the Controlling Power is responsible for the moral development of the native population" (ibid., 3). The advisory committee, concerned that there be educated men to meet its purposes, recognized that "Clever boys, for whom higher education is expedient, must be able to look forward to educated mates" (ibid., 8). Women's education was for the sake of the men who would be educated for the purposes of the Controlling Power.

A section on the "Education of Girls and Women" (ibid., 4) betrays the perplexity of the advisory committee. They write,

It is obvious that better education of native girls and women in Tropical Africa is urgently needed, but it is almost impossible to overstate the delicacy and difficulties of the problem. Much has already been done, some of it wise, some of it—as we now see—unwise. More should be done at once . . . but only those who are intimately acquainted with the needs . . . , while experienced in the using the power of education, can judge what it is wise to attempt. . . .

The primary reason for education was to train African men for participation in the colonial economy and administration. This provided a means for men to gain stature and power in the new colonial society. Rural life was undermined by absentee husbands; in the larger administrative and trading centers, women were relegated to menial tasks in the labor force. No provision was made for traditional family life or for the role of African women as leaders in their society and culture.

SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIAN WOMEN AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The years leading up to the Great Depression were felt by the British colonies and protectorates. *The Story of Old Calabar* notes that in April 1925 the Ibibio and Efik women, the predominant ethnic groups of the region, joined in protest of market tolls implemented by the colonizing government.

They refused to pay, drove off the laborers building a fence around the Marina market, disrupted the activities of the Bush Market . . . , closed all European factories on the river front and assaulted Europeans and police. (1986, 161-162)

As the economic depression grew, so did the effect upon the people. In 1929 a protest started at Oloko village, Owerri province, when "a woman clashed with a mission teacher conducting tax assessment" (ibid.). The women banded together and de-

manded the trial of the local warrant chief, forcing the district officer to sentence him to prison.

The women were organised: Folded palm leaves were sent to neighbouring villages as a signal and women all over southeastern Nigeria started spontaneous demonstrations against the colonial political and economic rule and attached establishments symbolizing the British presence—warrant chiefs, native courts and trading factories. (ibid.)

The most dramatic events took place in Calabar Province. Government troops were called in to quell the riots. Eighteen women were killed and nineteen wounded at Utu Etim Ekpo on December 14th; thirty-two were killed and thirty-one wounded at Opobo.

The “Women’s War,” begun as a protest against taxation, developed into a rejection of the entire colonial structure with the demand that “all white men should return to their own country, so that the land in any area may remain as it was many years ago, before the advent of the white man” (ibid.).

On the insistence of African members of the Legislative Council, two commissions of inquiry were held.

As a direct result of the women [sic] riots, taxes were reduced and tax collection in some areas cancelled. The warrant chiefs system was discarded and replaced by Native Authorities, consisting of the village elders, and intensive anthropological research was started to find out [about] the indigenous political government. (ibid.)

European interpretations of these events vary. According to Crowder, some accounts blame the riots on the women’s fear that they would be taxed, when in fact the poll tax was meant to apply only to adult males. “[P]rices for palm oil were low, and in any case for a people with very small cash income [it] presented considerable hardship” (1968, 228). Other authorities indicate that “indirect rule” was a disaster in southeastern Nigeria because “decisions and judicial processes were traditionally applied by consent among groups of senior men” (Hudgens and Trillo 1990, 998). At the time of the commission of inquiry in March 1931, *The Nigerian Daily Times* reported on the 10th that the colonial government should not have introduced a system of direct taxation “without first completing a survey of [local] social organization.”

Southeastern Nigeria was not England, with its well-defined, separate spheres for male wage earners and female homemakers.

A tax on adult males affected the women directly. They, in turn, brought about significant change in an alien institution that exploited their people.

This was the context which greeted the first Holy Child sisters on their arrival in southeastern Nigeria in September and October of 1930.

BEGINNINGS OF HOLY CHILD EDUCATION

Mother Mary Amadeus, as superior general, spent seven months in Nigeria, from September 1930 to April 1931, setting up the first Holy Child mission in Africa. The mandate for the Society from the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Shanahan, C.S.SP., read:

Open small bush stations and put your elder girls in charge; full training can come later. Your main work is to form leaders, and believe me, they will respond if you trust them. Have faith in the power of God's grace in yourselves to train them. (Hallahan 1980, 1-2)

In essence, the Society was asked to develop work already begun with young Nigerian women ("your elder girls") by Sister Magdalen Walker under the jurisdiction of the vicar apostolic. Margaret Walker, Sister Magdalen, had been an Irish Sister of Charity who had received permission to stay on in Calabar when her community returned to Europe. She and her biological sister, Magdalen Walker, had been educated at Mayfield, a Holy Child school in England (SHCJ 1946, 45).

Mother Mary Amadeus, the superior general, travelled extensively throughout the Ibibio and Efik lands. One finds in her notes (Mary Amadeus 1930) reference to continuing discontent among the women due to their belief that the colonial government authorities intended to tax them, that they were holding back money from the people, and that they no longer wished to engage in trade. Sr. Magdalen Walker, at a catechism class of 200-300 where Mother Mary Amadeus was present, explained that the trade depression was general and that they needed to try to make the best of it.

Although the Society for the Holy Child Jesus was to build on the earlier efforts of Sr. Magdalen in the Calabar area, Mother Mary Amadeus conceived of a much larger work to meet the educational needs she found in her extended travels. Having travelled through the greater part of Ibibio country visiting local towns and villages, her notes reveal that she is "convinced that it

is better to uplift the masses than to give higher education to a few" (*ibid.*). She also indicates that she wants the Society

to educate on predominately native lines, beginning from the bottom, to teach the people to live better, "to improve the life of the town" (Ikot Epenyong), to counteract disintegrating forces, to support authority of Chiefs and heads of families. (*ibid.*)

This is in keeping with recommended British educational policy, which provided guidelines for "Adaptation to Native Life" (see Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa 1925, 4), but perhaps not for the same reasons. The guidelines had been developed for the purposes of indirect rule. Concerned that the "schemes of education and training of teachers give the impression of having been made by those who only know the towns and who are not cognizant of [the] social conditions of the people, . . . framed for a particular [denominational?] College or School and . . . outside the life of the rural native . . .," Mother Amadeus states,

We want to train our teachers to go out to the . . . villages and to be "leaven" of their own people. Even during the course of their training, to go out and give practical experience and then to return at intervals to Calabar to gain further knowledge and formation. (Mary Amadeus 1925, 1)

Her idea was that the Holy Child schools would be considered as a whole, "that our teachers may be considered as forming one staff which can move about as need requires. In other words, that we may have one staff return, one grant and that our schools be considered as branches of one work" (*ibid.*) Mother Amadeus hoped to use ". . . this scheme of 'bases' to get into contact with a great number of people, chiefly women and children, and to help them spiritually and materially. Also to help the country politically" (*ibid.*).

Realizing the novelty of the plan, Mother Mary Amadeus decided that "the educational authorities should inspect [the plan's] working and watch the results and at the end of the period give their verdict as to its suitability" (*ibid.*). When one compares this plan with the document covering official educational policy in Africa (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa 1925), which was to be followed by all mission bodies, one finds a creative adaptation to the spirit and goals of Holy Child education as carried out in Europe and the United States.

THE HOPSANS

Dating to these early beginnings there are numerous alumnae of the Holy Child in both Nigeria and Ghana. As part of my research project it was possible for me to attend the 1994 Zonal Conference of the Holy Child Past Student Association (HOPSA)⁸ in Calabar. This provided an opportunity for me to gain a glimpse of Cornelia's educational heritage in Nigeria.

Some seventy-five or one-hundred women came together for the weekend to reflect on their shared history, the Holy Child philosophy of education, and the contribution of Holy Child women to the nation. I learned of the esteem and love with which the "Reverend Mothers" of earlier days are held. As we met on October 15, the zonal president, Mrs. Patricia Edet Nyambi, commented in her welcome address that although "the first batch of Holy Child sisters had arrived [in] England earlier, from the United States, it was on this Feast day of St. Theresa of Avila that the first Holy Mass in the first Holy Child Convent in Derby, England was celebrated" (Nyambi 1994). In a sense, their story had become the Society's story, for the first women to join Cornelia had been English and only later did the Society begin work in America!

For the Brazilian anthropologist and missionologist Marcello Azevedo,

Inculturation is the process by which Christian faith and life seek to express themselves according to the genius of a culture in its totality, not only in scattered forms. The Gospel message becomes an integrative force transmitting the culture from within. (Healey 1993, 13)

The mission education provided by the Society of the Holy Child Jesus for the women I met at the Zonal Conference has been this kind of integrative force.

The Holy Child alumnae who met that weekend in Calabar wore what they called "uniform." In keeping with the African custom of having a distinctive cloth in common for particular occasions, they wore a special Holy Child cloth they had had designed and printed. The continent of Africa encompassed in the Holy Child emblem was the repetitive design. Around the border

⁸ Women who belong to the Holy Child Past Students Association (HOPSA) refer to themselves as "HOPSANS." Since the Federated Holy Child Old Girls' Association meeting in Ibadan in 1993 the HOPSA terminology introduced in Ghana is being used in Nigeria because it is more welcoming to young women.

of the cloth was printed "Actions not Words." Anyone who has attended a Holy Child school, be it primary, secondary, vocational, or tertiary, is considered to be "Holy Child" and may wear the cloth.

These women expressed gratitude for the contribution of the Society of the Holy Child to women's achievements in Nigeria. Margaret Mary Essien made mention of the early efforts of the Holy Child sisters "in spite of the difficulties in Europe and America in the 1930's occasioned by the great depression after the First World War" (Essien 1994, 3). Memory of the great depression lingered.

The zonal meeting in Calabar also provided opportunity to hear how these Holy Child alumnae see themselves. One of them, Josephine K. Ukah, expressed these thoughts:

If I were asked who the Holy Child Woman is, I would very quickly declare what you have already been told by my other sisters.⁹ She is that unique personality in many ways who has been carefully and specially groomed and nurtured in those fine feminine qualities by those serene Reverend Mothers in one of those beautiful colleges built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. I would make haste to add that the Holy Child Woman is trained to imbibe in her personality the requirements of leadership such as careful judgment, sensitivity to the feelings and reactions of others, skill in communication, unflinching sense of humour, loyalty, dedication and zeal for service.

A typical Holy Child Woman therefore is a good citizen, a loving Christian mother, a dedicated wife, a resourceful teacher, a counsellor, a zealous worker whose very presence is oil to the machinery. She is a model of modesty in dress and fashion so that her total deportment is as fresh as the gentle breeze in a mild harmattan evening. She is a woman of immense skills, capabilities and integrity. Once I met a lady for the very first time, I will not mention names. Something in her comportment and expression gave me the feeling that she was brought up by the Holy Child Mothers. I was to discover in due course that I was dead right. (Ukah 1994, 4-5)

The interviews conducted in Calabar were set up so that the different Holy Child schools in this part of Nigeria where the Society had first worked would be represented. The last point about being able "to recognize" another Holy Child alumna was

⁹ In Africa the term "sister" is used commonly between women as a term of respect. For this reason, vowed religious are referred to as "reverend sisters" whereas an older woman may be addressed as "mother."

repeated many times during my travels. Yet, even as each of the conference delegates wore the Holy Child cloth in a manner designed and fashioned for her personally, I found in my interviews another commonality. In the course of my conversation I would ask if there was one value or word or characteristic that the interviewee would describe as being Holy Child. Without hesitation the alumna would answer "Yes!" and then, in one word, describe herself unconsciously with a response such as "modesty," "joy," and "strength," or "Of course, we have our motto, Actions not Words." Some of the responses of the younger women expressed a sense of communal pride. The common lens that was repeated was Cornelia Connelly's admonition, "Be yourself but make that self what God wants you to be."

One of the things that I learned on my visit to the Old Calabar museum is that the women of this region have come together in public protest of perceived injustice on several occasions since at least the late nineteenth century. In her address, Margaret Mary Essien drew attention to the fact that "many of the women in [Nigeria] who have broken, and are still breaking the political barriers raised against them in the past [as a result of colonialism] are Holy Child products" (Essien 1994, 4-5). An interesting 1957 photograph in the museum of the "Elected Representatives of Calabar Province in the Eastern House of Assembly" depicts twelve women and three men. It would be interesting to know who among these women is Holy Child and whether or not such a high female representation in political life in southeast Nigeria is usual.

In my travels to other parts of Nigeria and in Ghana I met other strong women leaders among the Holy Child alumnae. In Ghana I was present for the launching of the endowment fund for the Holy Child School at Cape Coast and College at Takoradi in preparation for their fiftieth Jubilee Celebration in 1996. These women, perhaps reflecting a matriarchal society for many, spoke publicly of "privileged husbands" who had been able to marry Holy Child past students.

The Ghanaian alumnae have their own Holy Child cloth emboldened with the emblem and motto *Facta non Verba*. When I asked them my question about a Holy Child characteristic, their inevitable answer was "service." According to a 1993 pamphlet, four objectives guide their HOPSA activities:

1. To maintain the spirit of friendship and unity among Past Students of the [Cape Coast] School and [Takoradi] College.
2. To provide a medium for communicating the views of the past students on matters relating to the Alma Mater.
3. To strive for human rights for all people and in particular advance the status of women.
4. To contribute to the social needs by helping to improve conditions in the local community. (HOPSA 1993, 7)

In 1981, for example, HOPSA in Ghana adopted the Female Acute Ward at the Psychiatric Hospital, Accra. The motto "Facta non Verba," fueled by a quality of love, was much in evidence in the lives and professional vocations of these women.

These are preliminary reflections arising from my research in Nigeria and Ghana. Further work is in process with the transcriptions of the interviews. What is evident is the fact that the spirit of Cornelia's educational legacy is being expressed from within the respective cultural matrices of women of Nigeria and Ghana. In the words of Mary Margaret Essien,

It is the special love of God which Mother Connelly and her Sisters allowed to work through them that has made us become what we are today. Let us, in turn, make our little sacrifice(s) to help others to become. (Essien 1994, 7)

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