

**CL 8530: Gospel and Culture. Sept-December,2006**

**Tutor: Mary Hess**

**Presenter: Faith K. Lugazia**

**Book Title: *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa.*** By Mercy Amba Yamoah Oduyoye.

Dr. Mercy, Amba Oduyoye is a Ghananian teacher and theologian born in April 1934 in Asamankese in Kumasi-Ghana. She married to Madupe Oduyoye, a Nigerian. As a teacher, Oduyoye had passion of education for girls, teenage pregnancy, early

marriages, rumors of abortions and occasional drop-outs for no apparent reason.

Mercy's involvement on church issues were articulated by her dad as he was asking her to read Bible verses accurately and loudly during Sunday services. She narrated the story of one of the Palm Sunday, when she was asked by her dad to read from Mathew 21:1-11 in her mother tongue, thus "I had to rehearse the passage with the right pauses and intonations until I could almost say it from memory, and of course, exactly as papa would have it read. That is how public speaking began for me."<sup>1</sup>

Mercy in this book dealt with Biblical exegesis in the African Context.

Ecumenism and Gender issues.

Biblical exegesis in Africa should follow the history of liberation in the book of exodus. As the Israelites were struggling for liberation from the Egyptians, Africans were for a long time struggling to be liberated from the colonial powers and traditional systems identified by her as traditional ordering of the society. Though Exodus in Africa can not follow physical/geographical movement African Exodus is "a departure from inflexibility ascribed positions whose hierarchical ordering was accepted as 'natural' and permanent."<sup>2</sup> She challenged African Christianity whose story writers begin by laying blame on

---

<sup>1</sup> Mercy, Oduyoye, *Beads and Strand: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, (Ghana: Regnum, 2002). Vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 4.

missionaries that they are the ones who oppressed the Africans. It is hierarchical structures and when these were added with missionary's attitude, African situation became worse and therefore the theology of liberation was an issue of immediacy. However, she noted that, in Exodus, the oppressed were the immigrants and in Africa, the oppressors are the ones who were immigrant, and oppression there in Africa took many forms. That is why up to this moment, Africans are called to ask for God's help so that they can be liberated physically, mentally and spiritually.

She tackled the issues of Traditional Culture, Immigration, Colonialism, power.

Oduyoye showed how Hierarchy undermined the community and ignored the individuals' ability to contribute, and an individual is condemned. She calls the Africans to look upon God who will bring real liberation because to be totally dependent on God, we have to have absolute trust in God.

She also raised the challenge of Christology in African continent where African Christian will learn of what it means to believe in Jesus. Mercy also tackled the question of naming Jesus Christ in African context. She named Jesus as a reconciler, redeemer, and warrior savior. All these names fits in the continent because of the context African Christians find themselves in.

In a nutshell, Mercy sees that Bible in Africa needs to be exegete in the life experiences of the people in context. Theology teaches that to be faithful to the Gospel, we have to take the daily life experiences of people and communities seriously, because Jesus just did that.

For Oduyoye, ecumenism has to embrace all aspects and needs of human beings. Have to be a liberating factor where human beings will live peacefully and respect God, respect

each other, and respect God's creation. When we talk about peace, we don't have to mean just end of war, because peace is more than that, it is to bring justice in all spheres of life. E.g., peace should be about leaving the Nicaragua's children grow in peace, feminization of poverty and the multiple oppression of the African woman. Ecumenism calls religion to put their faith into practice, act justly because God who is the source of religions is just.

Moving to Nigeria and worked at the theological institution was a time when she started to be sensitive to issues of gender. The theological faculty was embedded by men; she was the only woman in the faculty.

...,and trying to understand the status of women in patrilineal Africa where some of us are matrilineal, I had to write *Daughters of Anowa*, as well as many other articles...It was this experience that led to my taking the initiative that resulted in the formation of the Circle of the Concerned of the African Women Theologian in 1989.<sup>3</sup>

Coming to gender issues, Oduyoye is convinced that: "Biological gender is a given we can not escape, but gender as a base for building human relations and hierarchies, is of our own making... Thus, we can draw it out of the center and find a less conspicuous position for it."<sup>4</sup>

**Conclusion:** Oduyoye wants to challenge the church to contextualize its theology. To let individuals be participants by identify the needs and solution to the needs. As a woman, Oduyoye shows the world clear that if women in Africa get better education and determine to serve be it church or society, they can because after education what follows is determination. Oduyoye knows what she speaks.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ix...

<sup>4</sup> Oduyoye. 105.