

# Home and Away: Creating Female Religious Space for 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglican Missions in Southern Africa

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## RESÜMEE

### **Deborah Gaitskell: Daheim und auswärts. Das Schaffen eines weiblichen religiösen Raumes für anglikanische Missionen im südlichen Afrika im 20. Jahrhundert**

Missionarinnen verkörpern das Verhältnis Religion-Gender-Raum, denn sie verlassen den vertrauten Raum „zu Hause“ und bauen in der Fremde neue religiöse und kulturelle weibliche Räume auf, indem sie versuchen, ihr Glauben auf eine gender-spezifische Weise zu verbreiten. Der Aufsatz zeigt am Beispiel von fünf Anglikanerinnen aus Großbritannien, die zwischen 1907 und 1960 im Süd-Transvaal (Südafrika) bzw. in Mozambique missionarisch tätig waren, dass der sakrale Raum, der solchen Frauen zur Verfügung stand, sich in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts ausdehnte, ab Mitte des Jahrhunderts jedoch eher schrumpfte – teilweise wegen der Einführung von Apartheid, aber auch wegen des Strebens afrikanischer Frauen, sich von der Vormundschaft europäischer Missionarinnen zu befreien. Der Aufsatz zeigt eine raumbezogene Spannung zwischen einer hohen Wertschätzung der „Häuslichkeit“ und einer hohen Mobilität der Missionarinnen sowie der afrikanischen Christinnen, mit denen sie in Beziehung standen.

## **Introduction: Religion, Space and Gender**

Women missionaries themselves bring together and embody these three notions – religion, space and gender – very explicitly and powerfully, by the very fact of leaving their homes, their own familiar space and place, and moving away, generally abroad, to share their faith in a gender-specific way with the women and girls of the unconverted or nascent Christian communities there.

In the case of the five British women on whom I focus in this paper, they moved 6,000

miles away from home, to southern Africa, to work as Anglican missionaries in the southern Transvaal, whether based in Johannesburg, Potchefstroom or Pretoria. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) sent all but the last of the five. Deaconess Julia Gilpin (1861–1948) and Dora Earthy (1874–1960) were active in the region up to or including the First World War, Frances Chilton (1897–?) and Dorothy Maud (1894–1977) between the mid-1920s and 1950s, and Hannah Stanton (1913–93) from 1956–60, until her imprisonment and enforced departure.<sup>1</sup> All five carved out new and distinctive female religious and cultural spaces. Over (roughly) the first half of the twentieth century, these came to include women's devotional groups and church classes, a girls' school, a female urban hostel, a church 'Order' for widows, Sunday school provision, a single-sex Christian youth movement, girls' clubs and guilds, and, finally, theological training for African women leaders. In addition, there was (metaphorically) a spatial element to the conceptual development of Dora Earthy's missionary understanding once she moved to Mozambique and began turning herself into an anthropologist. Undeniably, too, the concrete issue of the actual physical location of these unmarried women missionaries became increasingly prominent and contested as segregation and then apartheid intensified across South Africa's cities as the century advanced. Some of the more theoretical literature on religion, space and gender offers insights which facilitate a reappraisal of these mission trajectories through a fresh prism.<sup>2</sup> The analytical language for getting us to think more spatially can be attractively vivid, as when Shirley Ardener describes how societies

*have generated their own rules, culturally determined, for making boundaries on the ground, and have divided the social into spheres, levels and territories with invisible fences and platforms to be scaled by abstract ladders and crossed by intangible bridges with as much trepidation or exultation as on a plank over a raging torrent.*<sup>3</sup>

However, across the range of scholars consulted, whether emerging from religious studies, anthropology, geography, feminism or post-colonialism, unhelpful dichotomies have generally been perpetuated. No author really succeeds in uniting the three concerns of religion, space and gender - or even sets out to do so. Harold Turner and Jean Holm, on the one hand, each write about places of worship and sacred places in a totally ungendered way,<sup>4</sup> while Ardener and Linda McDowell offer insights on women and space, or

1 Deaconess Julia remained in church employment in South Africa, but in the dioceses of Cape Town and George, until her death in 1948, while Dora Earthy relocated to the diocese of Lebombo 1917–30 before returning to England.

2 For evaluations of the quintet's race relations with African churchwomen, and in terms of the different theological perspectives each career seems to exemplify, see D. Gaitskell, *Female Faith and the Politics of the Personal: Five Mission Encounters in Twentieth-century South Africa*, in: *Feminist Review* 65 (2000), pp. 68–91; and *Beyond 'Devout Domesticity': Five Female Mission Strategies in South Africa, 1907–1960*, in: *Transformation: An International Evangelical Dialogue on Mission and Ethics* 16, 4 (1999), pp. 127–135.

3 S. Ardener (ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*, Oxford 1993 (revised edition; first published 1981), p. 2.

4 H.W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship*, The Ha-

gender and place, with barely a reference to *religion* the whole way through.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Chris Park makes the most comprehensive attempt to bring religion and geography together,<sup>6</sup> without a nuance of gender difference or hierarchy throughout his substantial monograph. By contrast, Reina Lewis and Sara Mills showcase feminists whose insights on race, power, culture and empire they feel fellow postcolonialists have unduly marginalized,<sup>7</sup> yet partially religious oriental phenomena like the veil or the harem are far more to the fore in their collection<sup>8</sup> than the Christian religion of the Western imperial powers.

Nevertheless, these incomplete perspectives can be intermeshed with one another and then juxtaposed against the historical record, to produce a more spatial appreciation of this series of five modern female mission encounters. There are three areas particularly worth probing: women's spaces, religious places, and female mobility.

## Women's Spaces

In the 'High Church' Anglicanism which is generally pervasive in southern Africa, the holiness of the church building itself, however humble, was always carefully fostered,<sup>9</sup> while the importance of the sacraments contributed to the elevation of the (in the past, exclusively) male priesthood, which had sole right to administer them. Thus Sunday church services provided a regular reminder of how, as Ardener notes, 'space speaks' and much can be learnt from 'the relevant position of each participant to another in a gathering, and to items in a fixed environment'.<sup>10</sup> In the mutual dependence of space and behaviour, or the physical world and our social perceptions of it, she argues, while space may define the people in it, people in turn also define space.<sup>11</sup> (Such couplets are echoed by others: Doreen Massey noting that 'it's not just that the spatial is socially constructed; the social is spatially constructed', while Henrietta Moore comments that 'Meanings are

gue 1979; J. Holm (ed.) with J. Bowker, *Sacred Place*, London 1994.

5 Ardener, *Women and Space* (note 3); L. McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Cambridge 1999; L. McDowell/ J.P. Sharp (eds), *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*, London 1997.

6 C.C. Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*, London 1994.

7 R. Lewis/ S. Mills (eds), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, New York 2003.

8 Constituting one of their six themes, *ibid.*, p. 3. Africa likewise seems as absent as Christianity from this compendium.

9 In fact, this Anglican tendency in South Africa epitomised the churchmanship of the Gothic revival against which Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House*, argues so vehemently as a betrayal of authentic Christianity and true Protestantism: 'In keeping with the temple tradition the building itself must not only create a sense of awe and mystery but also represent the richest and most splendid offering that man can make to God' (p. 246) The runaway popularity of Victorian Gothic stands opposed to his view that the church building should be a house for the people of God, a 'meeting-for-worship house' (p. 11) rather than a house for God. On the Gothic in Victorian South Africa, see D. Radford, *South African Christian Architecture*, in: R. Elphick/ R. Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social & Cultural History*, Oxford 1997, pp. 330-332.

10 Ardener, *Women and Space* (note 3), p. 2, quoting Hall and then Edwin Ardener.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

not inherent in the organisation of ... space, but must be invoked through the activities of social actors'.<sup>12</sup> Thus male priests round an altar in the 'sanctuary' as the climax of the Eucharist provided regular visual demonstration of the gendered spiritual hierarchy within which the five British women worked throughout their missionary lives. This resonates with McDowell and Sharp's comment on how

*[t]he spaces in which social practices [like church services] occur affect the nature of those practices, who is "in place", who is "out of place" and even who is allowed to be there at all. But the spaces themselves are in turn constructed and given meaning through the social practices that define men and women as different and unequal. Physical and social boundaries reinforce each other and spatial relations act to socialise people into the acceptance of gendered power relations – they reinforce power, privileges and oppression and literally keep women in their place.*<sup>13</sup>

The theological assumptions behind the exclusively male priesthood of that era pick up on one of Ardener's pair of suggestions for research: looking at the social conventions preventing women from entering given spaces. But she also proposes we look at the ways in which women *do* enter and exploit space,<sup>14</sup> just as McDowell and Sharp draw attention to how women can push against boundaries and challenge dominant power.<sup>15</sup> The South African material, because of its time-span, shows where spaces were opening for women missionaries: ecclesiastically, educationally, racially, residentially, theologically. Their often pioneering agency needs acknowledgement, but so do the forces working later on to close down spaces which they had opened up, whether emanating from government hostility or the growing power and autonomy of African Christians, both women and men.

Ardener's noting of how gender power relations over space may not be totally cut and dried also rings true for the blurred, potentially and often actually cooperative (though sometimes exploitative) 'partnership' between male priests (generally celibate 'Religious' from the Mirfield Community of the Resurrection [hereafter CR]) and unmarried women missionaries. She comments hypothetically that while women perhaps do not control physical or social space directly, that does not necessarily preclude them from being determinants of or mediators in the allocation of space.<sup>16</sup> In Doornfontein in the early days after Deaconess Julia came out to the Witwatersrand in late 1907, and again in Sophiatown in the 1930s and 40s, under Dorothy Maud, mission women and men lived next door to one another, saw themselves as working together in a joint religious enterprise, and drew practical, social and emotional strength from that relationship.<sup>17</sup> It

12 Both quoted in S. Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space*, in Lewis and Mills (eds), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 693-4. This piece first appeared in: *Gender, Space and Culture* 3, 2 (1996), pp. 125-147.

13 McDowell and Sharp (eds), *Space, Gender* (note 5), p. 3.

14 Ardener, *Introduction*, p. 21.

15 McDowell and Sharp (eds), *Space, Gender* (note 5), p. 3.

16 Ardener, *Women and Space* (note 3), p. 5.

17 See, for the early period, South African National Archives, Cape Town, ACC605, *Letters from South Africa 1907-12*, 'journals' home sent by Deaconess Julia's devoted friend and colleague, Marion Trist (hereafter Trist Letters);

was only when the Women Candidates' emissary from London saw, just before the First World War broke out, how much the women were tied down by endless needlework for the clergy (beyond their obligations to church school sewing classes) that protests and warnings were issued: the demands on them were 'quite impossible', the women looked anaemic and their house 'squalid and unrestful'.<sup>18</sup> London would send no more candidates unless these quarters were improved – which was done.

Certainly, in running female or youth baptism and confirmation classes, women were 'gatekeepers'<sup>19</sup> for entry into the spiritual space of church membership, albeit within a male-dominated ecclesiastical structure. Likewise, in churchwomen's groups, female missionaries initially monitored and facilitated membership of the separate space occupied by the devout matrons of the congregation, setting up Transvaal branches of churchwomen's organisations begun in Britain. However, over time, the African mothers and clergy wives ousted the single women of the SPG from real leadership in this sphere, whatever the nominal structure on paper. Spinster missionaries lost by the 1930s, in Sophiatown and across the Witwatersrand, a 'natural' female church authority over married black adults which, a generation earlier, certainly before 1910, seems to have been accorded to them with warmth and without complication.

Yet these African female church groups, whoever led them, could be seen as sacred spaces too. In reviewing the origin of Christian sacred places in the tombs of martyrs made holy by relics, rites, miracles and pilgrimage, Davies comments that sacred places were 'places of power',<sup>20</sup> drawing on the piety and faith of past saints and speaking of 'the power and grace of God that was evident in the lives of past believers'. Yet, having pointed to the Protestant mind-set that swept this world away, he concludes by asserting that, in a group celebrating the Eucharist, 'it is the community of believers that marks off a sacred territory rather than the other way around' [that is, sacred territory somehow sanctifying believers].<sup>21</sup> Fusing these ideas, I would that churchwomen's groups became 'places of power' and sacred territory not through tapping into the grace of God in the life of past believers or via the celebration of communion – which could only happen in church and administered by male priests – but through the sharing of current female experiences of family need and spiritual help via personal testimony, extempore prayer, song and the expounding of biblical texts.

## Religious Places

There is a whole key area of interest in the wider literature on the interface between space and religion which has resonance elsewhere in black South African Christianity

and for the later years, letters and reminiscences (especially some from Leseding in the 1940s) in the Ekutuleni Papers held in the United SPG collection at Rhodes House, Oxford (hereafter USPG).

18 USPG, Committee of Women's Work (CWW), Miss Phillimore to Miss Gurney, 21 March 1913.

19 Ardener, *Women and Space* (note 3), p. 1.

20 D. Davies, *Christianity*, in: Holm (ed.), *Sacred Place* (note 4), p. 47.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

but not in the southern Transvaal. This concerns pilgrimages to sites which have become sacred through links with the deity or past religious leaders.<sup>22</sup> Janet Hodgson's research on pilgrimages to the shrine of the prophetess Mantsopa near the Lesotho border deserves mention,<sup>23</sup> although she gives no particular place to gender, despite the many female devotees.<sup>24</sup> Manche Masemola, northern Transvaal teenage martyr, provides another female example of a focus for pilgrimage,<sup>25</sup> in an area (Sekhukhuneland) where 'the church was struggling to gain a foothold' because 'the locals held fast to their many sacred places'. Hodgson considers that, because black people 'seek holy places where they can recover their wholeness and are empowered to carry on the struggle for life', African Christians 'have subverted the strategic importance of Manche's shrine as a diocesan centre of symbolic power with innovative symbols of their own.'<sup>26</sup>

Leaving all that aside, with its untapped potential for a more gendered analysis of sacred places, for Park, the many ways religion shapes landscape 'represent without doubt the most visible link between geography and religion';<sup>27</sup> this may range from the overall physical appearance of any sacred site to religion's impact on architecture, settlement patterns and farming practices.<sup>28</sup> He quotes a perceptive appraisal from a generation ago, which noted how mission stations

*[w]ith their chapels, residences, dormitories, schools, dispensaries, gardens, utility buildings, water-supply systems, and good access roads [...] stand in great contrast with their immediate surroundings. In the confrontation of Europeans with African ways of life these stations have been for the missionaries a refuge, a symbol of achievement and a home; for the Africans they have been strongholds of alien ways from religion to agriculture, an intrusion but also a promise of help, of learning and of a better life.*<sup>29</sup>

Urban missionaries, though, might not have such freedom in construction. More constrained by the existing built environment, on the one hand, over which they had less control than with a bare rural plot of land, they also faced increasing legislative direction from a segregationist state wanting to regularise separate racial living areas in town. Nevertheless, Julia Gilpin and Dorothy Maud made an impact on the suburbs and townships with their building projects – as did their CR compatriots.

22 Park, *Sacred Worlds* (note 6), Ch. 8.

23 J. Hodgson, Mantsopa: Popular Religion and the Anglican Church in South Africa, in: G. Cuthbertson/ H. Pretorius/D. Robert (eds), *Frontiers of African Christianity: Essays in Honour of Inus Daneel*, Pretoria 2003, pp. 210-235.

24 D. Coplan, Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimage along the South Africa-Lesotho Border, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, 4 (2003), pp. 976-993, at least begins to consider, on p. 983, what the 'prominence and numerical dominance of women' at the shrine might signify.

25 J. Hodgson, 'Stones the Builders Rejected': Ecclesial Communities of the Excluded in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, in: D.L. Robert (ed.), *African Christian Outreach Vol. 2 Mission Churches, African Initiatives in Christian Mission*, Vol. 9, Menlo Park, Pretoria 2003, pp. 117-155. The section on Masemola covers pp. 141-6.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

27 Park, *Sacred Worlds* (note 6), p. 244.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

29 H. B. Johnson. The Location of Christian Missions in Africa, in: *Geographical Review* 57 (1967), p. 168, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 140.

The Comaroffs offer rich evidence of mission architectural example and intervention among the Tswana, with photographs from missionary Willoughby of 'Improved Native Dwellings' where the crooked (or round) has been made straight.<sup>30</sup> It is also worth noting the recent interest in such questions shown by Belgian architects, alongside their colleagues in history and religious studies.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, missionary building has been relatively under-researched; even the Comaroffs are more interested in new Christian homes and communities – a valid emphasis – than new church buildings as such, while, by contrast, Radford's enterprising overview of South Africa's Christian architecture regrettably limits itself almost exclusively to churches.<sup>32</sup> This neglect of the wider missionary 'built environment' is at odds with the way male rural mission pioneers in Africa invariably had to build their own house first, then a church-cum-school, while female partners either made exemplary marital homes (within suitably rectangular structures) among potential converts and/or taught women and girls the essentials of Christian home-making and motherhood.

Karina Hestad Skeie provides a rare recent example of nuanced analysis of this highly gendered process,<sup>33</sup> underlining the 'striking materiality' of a vital initial period when actual building construction - of often surprisingly elaborate missionary houses, churches and schools - greatly preoccupied Norwegian men in Madagascar. They reconciled themselves to this 'external' labour, deemed only indirectly part of mission, she argues, by linking the visibility of their very material dwellings with their wives (who focused on home-making in the most 'Norwegian' way possible), and prioritising in their own thinking the more 'real', more 'male' and 'spiritual' work of preaching and conversion concerned with 'internal', invisible religious response. 'The more visible the task, the less important it was held to be',<sup>34</sup> and thus, for the male missionary, both 'the lived world of the station' and 'the key role of his wife in the missionizing enterprise' were performed made invisible and overlooked.

30 J. L./J. Comaroff, *Mansions of the Lord: Architecture, Domesticity, Interiority*, in: *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, Chicago 1997, Ch. 6.

31 See Call for Papers by Bram Cleys on H-ASIA, 30 October 2006, for a conference planned for Leuven in November 2007: *Spatializing the Missionary Encounter. The Interaction between Missionary Work and Space in Colonial Settings*, with its particular interest in mission architecture 'not so much as a backdrop' to, but 'an essential part of', the missionary encounter itself, with converts and other non-missionaries as 'co-producers' of such architecture. Three fields of enquiry were envisaged: questioning 'how and with what intent missionary work brought about spatial and architectural structures'; focusing on both the 'everyday and extraordinary practices that missionary spaces dictated or made possible'; and probing both the 'received and contested meaning(s) revealed and created by missionary spaces'.

32 Radford, *South African Christian Architecture* (note 9), pp. 327-336. I would endorse the Comaroffs' view of the spatial organisation of domestic and community mission architecture as consciously 'Christian' in conception, making sacred or, certainly, sanctified places just as much as putting up a church might do. The narrower concern with church buildings, however, is also well served in J. Oxley, *Places of Worship in South Africa*, Halfway House 1992, an informative, beautifully illustrated source encompassing at least eleven notable mission churches among its 45 Christian (plus eleven non-Christian) centres across the country.

33 K.H. Skeie, *Building God's Kingdom: The Importance of the House to 19th Century Norwegian Missionaries in Madagascar*, in: I. M. Okkenhaug (ed.), *Gender, Race and Religion: Nordic Missions 1860-1940*, *Studia Missionalia Svecana* XCI, Uppsala 2003, pp. 175-202.

34 Skeie, *Building God's Kingdom* (note 33), p. 200.

However, these novel insights have limited applicability to the far more urbanised, second- or third-generation Christian context of the southern Transvaal, where the twentieth-century Anglican mission actors were invariably single and thus not living in conjugal units meant to provide a model to newly converted African couples. Nor, although they necessarily did small-scale domestic instruction of kitchen employees and temporarily began their girls' school in rooms adjoining their own, were the early spinster missionaries using their own homes as key educational spaces in the church's cause, as so many nineteenth-century mission wives did.<sup>35</sup> What mattered more in the era explored here were three other kinds of sacred or (semi-) religious buildings: actual churches; African homes; and structures erected explicitly to 'house' female mission work, of which a school, a hostel and three 'settlements' provide the main examples.

In the southern Transvaal in the early twentieth century, male clergy were invariably the actual builders of mission churches or those who directed their construction. However, women missionaries could be vital to the adornment of the modest, corrugated iron structures which proliferated in the interior, mostly 'built on the spot quickly and cheaply', being 'regarded as temporary expedients in a pioneering situation'.<sup>36</sup> Soon after arriving in 1907, Deaconess Julia's assistant was 'specially glad' to hear the Fathers next door wanted the women to take charge of the CR chapel: 'at present it is very bare & masculine in appearance and we should be so glad to be allowed to put flowers & finishing touches & take care of the linen &c.' Two months later, they had been 'chiefly engaged on needle-work' that week because so many of their little churches – being put up at a great rate by the zealous and expeditious Father Bennett – had 'such dilapidated & inadequate furnishing', they were making up simple altar coverings out of anything they could lay their hands on – and, she added soon after, describing the green and gold frontal they were busy on, as bright as possible 'to please the native taste & brighten up the dull little Churches'.<sup>37</sup> In 1912, what perturbed the SPG was the fact that the single women were not only 'always making or mending' for the CR fathers,<sup>38</sup> but were in addition, as Theodora Williams lamented, 'perpetually making cassocks & surplices for native men & boys, & altar frontals & curtains for the little churches', with, by then, 'at least 40 churches & over 100 catechists to be supplied'.<sup>39</sup> 'Feminine' devotion and skills

35 So widely that Dana Robert, *American Women*, pp. 410-411, has dubbed the 'ideal of the "Christian home," where men and women received equal respect and where children received nurture and consistent care, an important part of American women's missionary theory and practice' – notwithstanding its negative as well as positive aspects (pp. 56-75). For early South African examples, see the thirty young converts (mostly male) serving 'a kind of apprenticeship' in Christian family life within the Allison mission household, in S. Meintjes, *Family and Gender in the Christian Community at Edendale, Natal, in Colonial Times*, in: C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Claremont, Cape 1990, pp. 132-4; or missionary wives' varied use of their home in D. Gaitskell, *Re-thinking Gender Roles: The Field Experience of Women Missionaries in South Africa*, in: A. Porter (ed.), *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2003), pp. 134-141.

36 Radford, *Christian Architecture* (note 9), p. 332.

37 Trist Letters, 17.11.1907; 12.1. and 25.3.1908.

38 See above, note 18.

39 USPG, CWW, T. Williams to Miss Saunders, 15 December 1912.



in adorning the church with flowers and candles for festivals and keeping it a special place on a regular basis continued to be prized into the 1950s; this was a gift in one of her quiet colleagues which Hannah Stanton much admired and wanted to pass on to their black women students.<sup>40</sup>

Very occasionally, artistically gifted nuns in South Africa have contributed memorable visual enhancement to sanctuaries. Sister Pientia Selhorst, for instance, had a studio at Mariannahill mission where 'she designed the magnificent stained-glass windows, mosaics and ecclesiastical art work which adorn many Roman Catholic churches all over South Africa'.<sup>41</sup> The Church of Christ the King in Sophiatown had a distinguished architect, Frank Fleming, former business partner of the renowned Herbert Baker.<sup>42</sup> But its memorable murals were created by another artistic nun, the Anglican Sister Margaret CR (from the all-female Community of the Resurrection of our Lord, Grahamstown), who captured the likenesses of Dorothy Maud and her male CR co-worker, Father Raymond Raynes, in her portrayals (to left and right of the altar) of the Virgin and Saint Francis.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of reshaping African Christian houses and training women in home-making, the pioneering mission work was done in the Victorian era.<sup>44</sup> Twentieth-century urban female missionaries did not harp on black domestic architecture in the way Jane Waterston had, with her assertion that Christian family life was impossible in a round hut.<sup>45</sup> But devout motherhood and upright domesticity (alongside evangelistic fervour) remained the central rationale of churchwomen's groups.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, alongside this focus on 'devout domesticity', we should not overlook the institutional contribution of buildings where women (and girls) and their needs are central. As McDowell notes, early women-only schools (and colleges and convents) 'provided

40 See references to Cecily Paget's contribution in the sacristy, especially the first memorable Easter, and her later teaching of their African students about the observance of festivals, ceremonial, vestments and care of the church. H. Stanton, *Go Well Stay Well: South Africa August 1956 to May 1960*, London 1961, pp. 70-71, 90-91, 104-5.

41 Oxley, *Places of Worship*, p. 99, and see pp. 54 and 74 for examples of her mosaics in Queenstown and Mackay's Nek.

42 Radford, *Christian Architecture* (note 9), pp. 33-4.

43 See the vivid account and pictures in G. Butler, *The Prophetic Nun: Sister Margaret CR, Sister Pauline CR, Sister Dorothy Raphael CSMV*, Johannesburg 2000, pp. 52-61.

44 See Meintjes, *Family and Gender* (note 35), pp. 134-145, and H. Hughes, 'A Lighthouse for African Womanhood': Inanda Seminary, 1869-1945, in: Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender* (note 35), especially pp. 203-218.

45 She contrasted 'comfortless beehives without chimney or window in which men, women and children herded together in piggish fashion' with the Christian ideal of 'furnished cottages presided over by women who have been taught the work which goes to make the physical comfort of a home and who have also had those educational advantages which make them companions and no longer merely slaves and beasts of burden'. From 'The Evolution of Lovedale, its Aims, Principles and Results', in J. Waterston to James Stewart, 10.10.1878, in L. Bean and E. van Heyningen, *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston 1866-1905*, Cape Town 1983, pp. 123, 125. For more on Waterston's domestic ideology, see D. Gaitskell, *At Home with Hegemony? Coercion and Consent in the Education of African Girls for Domesticity in South Africa before 1910*, in D. Engels/ S. Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India*, London 1994, pp. 115-118.

46 See D. Gaitskell, *Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa*, in: Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender* (note 35), pp. 251-272. Reprinted in A. Cornwall (ed.), *Readings in Gender in Africa*, Oxford/Bloomington 2005, pp. 177-187.

both refuge and an opportunity for women to gain confidence and credentials'.<sup>47</sup> St Agnes School and the Buxton Street hostel on the one hand, and the more dispersed female institutions of Wayfarers and the Order of Widows, on the other (which nevertheless also used buildings for their 'sacred' work), share in the dilemma McDowell poses – are such single-sex spaces empowering or do they trap women in a ghetto of special needs? They may do both simultaneously at different levels, I would guess, or have a distinctive periodisation through a spectrum of such possibilities.

In addition, Maud and her colleagues (Margaret Leeke in Orlando and Clare Lawrance in Pretoria) erected purpose-built houses as centres for their distinctive religious activities, even though all were alongside churches that were the ultimate focus of their devout spirituality. In deliberately choosing to site their 'settlement houses' in African living areas, this group of women were going against custom or (in Soweto) on the edge of legality. But they consciously created their 'home' among their black 'charges' and 'away' from the habitual residential areas of even other white urban missionaries (let alone settlers), in order to make a point about identification with the racially disadvantaged and the necessary incarnation of the gospel in bricks and mortar.

### **Moving between Spaces and Places: Female Mobility**

In reflecting on the interplay of religion, space and gender, what is also suggestive in Ardener is her attention to female mobility, determined to some degree by the nature of physical space and in turn affecting women's appreciation of space. How sedentary or stationary are the women, as opposed to being mobile? What are the restrictions on their movements, and what is their degree of dependence on mechanised and other forms of transport?<sup>48</sup> This puts me in mind of Deaconess Julia in the early days of visiting scattered congregations up and down the Reef, where her dignity and age seem to have demanded her being fetched by horse and cart from the railway station while her younger colleagues wrote with gusto of their long but exhilarating or perilous bicycle rides across the veld to the peri-urban congregations.<sup>49</sup> Dora Earthy likewise enthusiastically travelled long distances on foot or on makeshift transport, or undertook laborious rail trips at awkward times of night to make contact with African Christian women in the area round Potchefstroom. When researching Valenge women's culture in Mozambique in the late 1920s, she travelled on foot with trusted African women from the Maciene congregation and slept in local kraals, eating local food, just as she had done on church itineration in the region. Thus these two women from the most 'imperial' and 'colonial' days of the quintet exemplify the relative freedom from constraint which so strikes Sara Mills from the In-

47 McDowell, *Gender, Identity* (note 5), p. 119.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

49 See, for instance, *Trist Letters* 19.2.1908, a 'great day' which involved five and a half hours cycling and a serious rain storm, or 17.3.1908 for the 'glorious morning' riding to Vlakfontein, 'the only draw back being a strong side wind' and yet another storm with lightning 'but we did not get very wet & are none the worse'.

dian material also, contravening too simple and conventional a view of colonial women as invariably passive and restricted by both architecture and ideology.<sup>50</sup>

Dorothy Maud in Sophiatown had a less broadly Reef-wide and exclusively African mobility. She combined being locally rooted as a matter of spiritual vocation, living in a famous mixed-race suburb, with moving in Johannesburg bourgeois society to mobilise the consciences of prosperous whites, getting them involved financially or organisationally in her projects. Her colleagues' mobility in Orlando was vital to church follow-up by house-to-house visiting of the lapsed who had moved out to Soweto. Frances Chilton, by contrast, deeply aware of the limitations of her social origins, was more confined to the institutional settings of the school and the hostel, though her travelling for the youth movement and in the cause of Sunday Schools recalled the Reef-wide brief of the early days. The shrinking of political and social options in the late 1950s, as well as her relatively recent arrival in South Africa, perhaps combined to narrow Hannah Stanton's world to Lady Selborne township, though she was also more critical, in view of the dawning of African independence elsewhere in the continent, of the unreconstructed attitudes of Pretoria's white suburban do-gooders whom Maud might have welcomed twenty years earlier.

I turn now to sketch out, largely by use of mission sources and in more coherent sequential detail, some of the ways in which the five women opened up, moved around in and exploited new spaces in female missionary work among Africans in the southern Transvaal and Mozambique, before drawing some brief general conclusions about the gendered impact of these Christian encounters.<sup>51</sup>

### **Julia Gilpin: New Collective Spaces for Female Devotion, Girls' Education and Safe Urban Residence**

Deaconess Julia certainly took gender-specific initiatives in Johannesburg as expected, making a vital threefold contribution in the whole arena of 'devout domesticity' – but we could also helpfully view these initiatives as carving out distinctive single-sex spaces for spiritual development and refuge. First, she started weekly devotional meetings for married women communicants, on the mine compounds and in the slumyards of downtown Johannesburg, which became a powerhouse of female spiritual and social solidarity (as in all the black churches). Next, she founded St Agnes Industrial School in Rosettenville to give domestic training to African girls – in part, to provide servants for settlers, though black parents viewed it differently, as an elite preparation for Christian wifehood. Thirdly, for safe accommodation for African women working in town she established a small hostel, later consolidated and expanded to act as a modest employment registry.

50 Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (note 12), pp. 697, 713.

51 The rest of the article draws in part on material set out in Gaitskell, *Female Faith* (note 2), but recasts it in ways that seek to highlight space, place and mobility, as well as the contrast between notions of 'home' and 'away', as per my title.

In terms of the 'built environment', the religious space for their church educational effort, the pioneer women showed an eager interest in the plans to enlarge their Doornfontein house to accommodate some scholars; they then worked out requirements for the school itself, reporting regularly on meetings with the architect, poring over building plans, progress in construction and funding, furniture-buying, and the triumphant (though wet) day of the grand opening of the school in March 1909 with local dignitaries and supporters in attendance – the culmination of hopes dating back to when they first heard Father Fuller 'emphasizing the need of it in Exeter Hall'. The relocation of the Deaconess and her assistant to Buxton Street and the work needed to make that new Doornfontein place habitable and comfortable likewise evoked detailed accounts from Marion Trist.<sup>52</sup>

As plans for the school were under way in 1908, Deaconess Julia spoke of how, although it was desirable to get more African girls into domestic service, their parents would not permit it without safer accommodation than the backyard sheds on white properties which posed both physical and sexual dangers. She and her helpers could do much good via a hostel for girls until they found situations, combined with a registry office and dormitories for those not living with their employers.<sup>53</sup> She appears to have started a hostel at Buxton Street that year, though it soon lapsed. Revived in 1914, after Gilpin had moved to work in the Cape, it expanded considerably and only closed in 1951. Nevertheless, this was an important initiative in demonstrating female religious concern for safe housing, a protected place or space, for African women at work in the city.<sup>54</sup>

### **Dora Earthy: Space for Linguistic Meeting, Cultural Bridge-Building and a Refuge for Widows**

The second woman in the quintet was not responsible for any pioneering building projects: the spaces she carved out were, rather, intended for inter-cultural and inter-faith meeting. First of all, Dora Earthy stood out from her contemporaries for her missionary zeal, her jaunty reports, and her linguistic enterprise, which provided an unrivalled basis for superb communication with African women. When she was running church classes and prayer meetings in the slumyards of central Johannesburg (1911–14), an SPG visitor pronounced her 'charming, gentle, steady, persevering, daunted by nothing, acquiring the languages with great rapidity, loving her work, & a missionary out & out.'<sup>55</sup> In her previous employment, indexing at the Royal Society in London, her command of several European languages came in handy for scientific translations. In South Africa, she learnt Dutch and Tswana, in Mozambique, Chopi and Shangaan, as well as brushing up on her

52 See Trist Letters, 29.2.1908, 3.3.1908, 25.3.1908, 7.4.1908, 28.11.1908; 5.2.1909, 14.2.1909, 5.3.1909.

53 C.R. [Journal of the Community of the Resurrection], 21 (1908).

54 See further D. Gaitskell, 'Christian Compounds for Girls: Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907–1970', in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, 1 (1979), pp. 44–69.

55 USPG, CWW, Miss Phillimore to Miss Gurney, 21.3.1913.

Portuguese, dipping into several other tongues in retirement. Whereas some long-serving American missionary women were fluent in Zulu, the other Anglican women in this study, especially the urban interwar activists in Sophiatown working with schoolchildren who were learning English, did not steep themselves in African languages. She also voiced greater emotional attachment to the women among whom she worked than did her contemporaries. Leaving Potchefstroom in 1916 to follow the call to Mozambique, for instance, was a real wrench:

*These last few weeks have been a very painful time for me, for I have loved the natives, and they have been so very sweet to me. They have simply been showering little farewell gifts upon me. It is all I can do to keep from breaking down... I feel so ashamed to think I did not love them more & serve them better while I still had the chance. One woman did say very sweetly this week: 'She came from a far land to make herself one with us, we black people.'*<sup>56</sup>

This linguistic competence and human warmth facilitated her later self-taught anthropological skills. When her book *Valenge Women* was published, the Cambridge don A.C. Haddon provided the short Introduction. He had first encouraged Dora's research back in 1921, when she wrote asking for advice, recognising that 'with her knowledge of the language, her sympathetic character, and the close contact which her professional duties implied, she was in a peculiarly favourable position to undertake such investigations'. Furthermore, he thought that '[s]tudies of this kind can be accomplished only by women', and though many might have equal opportunities, 'very few' had 'sufficient enthusiasm, training, and catholicity to undertake them' especially with 'the extra-ordinarily conscientious care' with which the observations were recorded.<sup>57</sup>

Dora did, however, encourage the adaptation of the mission station's configuration of buildings in the cause of female religious autonomy. Alongside her routine religious teaching duties in the Mozambique congregation from 1917, she soon spotted a possible opening for a new development, to protect Christian widows from the levirate, which might well entail being 'inherited' by a 'heathen' brother-in-law. She wanted to make it possible for such widows to

*live together & work for their living (which they do in any case) & attend Church services & classes as much as possible; instead of being at the beck & call of a heathen husband who has already a superfluity of wives. They should be free to make a second Christian marriage if they choose.*

There were already three in 1920 to form a nucleus of such an 'order'.<sup>58</sup> Like Dora, these were women without men, many of them mature and closer to her in age. She was safe-

56 USPG, CWW, Earthy to Miss Saunders, 26.11.1916.

57 A.C. Haddon, Introduction, to: E.D. Earthy, *Valenge Women: The Social and Economic Life of the Valenge Women of Portuguese East Africa. An Ethnographic Study*, London 1933, v.

58 USPG, CWW 140, Earthy to Miss Saunders, 31.7.1920.

guarding their right to live outside conventional conjugal domestic space, relocated on church property as unattached women in their own place, freed from compulsory remarriage. With time, she came to lean on two of them in particular for material and emotional support. By 1923, she had 15 women in her Band of Anna and listed them all by name, distinguishing the special circumstances which had brought each to the mission;<sup>59</sup> by 1927, there were nineteen of them, Rhoda and Mara being especially involved in Dora's church work, coming on trek with her: 'We have often slept in native huts and eaten native food, and have thus been brought into closer touch with the life of the women.'<sup>60</sup> It was they who accompanied her on her six months' research towards the book. From the beginning in Mozambique, Earthy was trying to see how Christianity could build on the inherent sense of worship of the people, or show them the true version of their existing rites of purification. Her 1920 report was full of material on traditional beliefs and how Christianity could be grafted on.<sup>61</sup> From the next year, she was excitedly discovering anthropology and sending long descriptions of African customs and practices to the Women's Committee. By 1926, she had published an article in the international mission press whose overall thrust was to suggest ways in which ritual practices associated with women's lives could be adapted to Christianity, and Christian spiritual teaching could build on existing patterns of thought, because Christ himself was the bridger of all gulfs, whether that separating heathenism and Christianity, or the passage 'from sin to holiness, from death to life.'<sup>62</sup>

In retirement, Dora Earthy seemed to be catching the wave of the time in her very positive and inclusive 1933 assertion of the potential for adapting Valenge ritual to the detailed progress believers made through the catechumenate, baptism and Christian marriage. She was sure from her own long experience among the Lenge of their deep understanding and acceptance of notions of sin, the practice of confession, the ceremony of confirmation, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and remembrance of the dead. She even returned to her metaphor of the bridge, but in a more encompassing fashion, suggesting that even the cultural resources of pagan society might be reaching across the gap:

*Between African paganism and Christianity there is a gulf, the spiritual counterpart of the Victoria Falls. Only the Master Architect and Builder can bridge that gulf, but His workmen can help by finding the materials wherewith to build the bridge and span the gulf, under His direction. Tribes and classes of people have each their own contribution to bring.*<sup>63</sup>

These ideas were a new metaphorical 'space', in a sense, for thinking about religious interaction.

59 USPG, E, Earthy, 12.12.1923.

60 Ibid., Dec. 1927.

61 USPG, E, Earthy, 29.12.1920.

62 D. Earthy, The Customs of Gazaland Women in Relation to the Christian Church, in: International Review of Missions [IRM] 15 (1926), pp. 662-74.

63 E.D. Earthy, An African Tribe in Transition from Paganism to Christianity, in: IRM 22 (1933), p. 367.

## **Frances Chilton: Concentrated Space for Domestic Training Superseded by Dispersed Informal Christian Education for the Young**

Frances Chilton applied to do children's work in a school or institution, and children indeed remained her central focus until retirement in 1955. She began by teaching domestic science to girls at St Agnes School, thus taking forward the 'home' orientation of female education begun by Julia Gilpin, but in fact by the 1930s some African girls were going far further at school, even to the academic high point of Standard 8 with its rather theoretically slanted domestic science course.

With time, however, Chilton got involved in the mission-dominated girls' uniformed movement, Wayfarers (a segregated alternative to Girl Guides), which drew particularly on school pupils and used female teachers as leaders. She advanced to seniority as a Commissioner and was responsible for training many black leaders in a movement whose games, songs, camps and uniforms helped enliven and consolidate the female 'school' community of faith.

Chilton also took charge from 1933 of Reef township Sunday Schools, her career illustrating the striking expansion of Protestant mission activity among African schoolchildren in the inter-war period, in the face of rising numbers and increasing secularisation of the day schools. Churches hoped to revitalise Christianity's popular appeal by more pleasurable, informal and sociable methods to win over the young – and indeed these new fields of trans-cultural interaction proved vital to mission consolidation in this era. Frances organised weekly training classes for the young Sunday School teachers – some drawn from older school-pupils – and sent out suggested programmes, producing lessons which were translated into several African languages for dissemination. By 1937, she supervised 37 such schools, reaching 2,000 children under 87 teachers.<sup>64</sup> All three of these 'spaces' of work imposed no generational or conjugal barriers to Frances as a young woman.

In 1946, the Mothers' Union presidency – overseeing the large network of weekly devotional groups which, again, were ultimately a legacy of Gilpin's time – 'was rather thrust on' Frances, as convention still demanded white supervision. She did it because she had to, but it definitely took second place to her Sunday School work. While taking organisational responsibility for seeing that members paid their dues and got their badges, she was too busy to develop a close knowledge of their concerns. She largely left the running of the Mothers' Union to the black clergy wives, conceding that the women also took the attitude, 'What could she know about mothers, because she was single?' She did not speak of married African women with the warmth and intimacy of Dora Earthy's letters, and this was an area where earlier space for trans-cultural religious cooperation was shrinking for spinster missionaries.

64 Interview with Frances Chilton, 2.2.1978; *The Watchman*, August 1937.

## Dorothy Maud: Space for Racial Peace-Making among the Young via Deliberate Residential Rootedness

While overlapping with Chilton's period of service both in time and the focus on children, Dorothy Maud's work in Johannesburg constituted a far more explicit and self-conscious project of inter-racial spiritual cooperation, acutely alive to African political sensitivities in the late 1920s. But place and location were crucial, and special buildings pivotal. Under Dorothy's energetic leadership, two 'settlement houses' were built in African residential areas of Johannesburg, Ekutuleni (Zulu for The House of Peace)<sup>65</sup> in Sophiatown in 1928, and Leseding (Sotho for The House of Light) in Orlando, the first township in what became Soweto, in 1935. Although Dorothy herself had no experience of working in the London East End settlements, those experiments in religious and social bridge-building were part of her mentors' conceptual baggage. She wanted Ekutuleni to show that a new racial unity (as opposed to London's cross-class fellowship) was possible through Christ.

Opened in February 1929, a large double-storey house with five bedrooms, sitting room, offices and chapel, with clubroom and playground close by, Ekutuleni was visited that year by Margery Perham, colonial researcher:

*[It] looks very clean and modern, standing on top of the stony outcrop of a little kopje, which gives it a sense of light and space in those oppressive surroundings. Inside it is Oxford-English to the last bit of china, with gay London Underground posters, homespun curtains and Medici prints. A cheerful crowd of women in bright linen aprons were preparing a Sunday School party, calling out to each other by their Christian names, all very happy and united.*<sup>66</sup>

By 1943 (when Dorothy left to become a nun), Ekutuleni and Leseding housed a dozen white women missionaries doing social and church-building work reaching over 6,000 African children via church preparation classes, Sunday school, youth movements, a vast range of clubs and four nursery schools. Replicas followed in Pretoria and Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. The fact that women missionaries deliberately built themselves homes in African areas in the very years when the city was implementing residential segregation - and quite against the trend of (married) white missionary practice - is perhaps the most striking aspect of the whole affair. Singleness freed and empowered them in this respect, whereas it correspondingly limited their effective work to one among urban children, rather than the adult women so frequently assumed to be their natural constituency. Maud worked in lively partnership with the CR leader Raymond Raynes to expand the church's social and educational reach - which had a notable impact on the

65 Sometimes 'Place' instead of 'House' was the term employed, hence, 'The Place of Peace-making', highlighting the stress on location, and suggesting a wider, less purely domestic potential.

66 M. Perham, *African Apprenticeship: An Autobiographical Journey in Southern Africa, 1929*, London 1974, p. 143.



physical environment. In six years they ‘built three churches, seven schools, three nursery schools... expanded the hospital and built a swimming bath’ while also campaigning successfully for ‘water, lighting, sanitation and roads’ in the townships.<sup>67</sup>

The long-term fate of these innovative spaces for female religious interaction with African girls as well as boys is a reminder of the wider spatial reconfigurations at work (which would also have an impact on the efforts of the last of our five). The venture was handed over to nuns by the 1940s; then the forced removal of the Sophiatown population and the further development of Soweto outflanked both houses and removed their *raison d’être*: being in among the people. By the 1970s Ekutuleni became, like Pretoria’s Tumelong, an umbrella term for a range of church-linked spiritual, educational and welfare projects directed from an organisational centre which was descended from the original but unable, under apartheid legislation, to sustain its deliberate self-placing in an African suburb.

### **Hannah Stanton: Residential Identification as a Basis for the Theological Training of Adult African Women**

When Hannah Stanton agreed in 1956 to become warden of the Ekutuleni offshoot, Tumelong, ‘The Place of Faith’, in the African township of Lady Selborne, Pretoria, it was the significance of place and location at that historic juncture that swung it for her. Its standard repertoire of youth-oriented activities then (confirmation classes, Guides, nursery and Sunday schools) – very much echoing Ekutuleni in the 1930s – was at odds with her own professional training and employment history. Nevertheless, the chance of residential identification mattered: to live among and work with the people, getting to know them as friends, drew her. She would be sharing hardships: dust, heat, flies, bucket sanitation, some of the insecurity of the future. In the end, the intense shock of a political confrontation in her first month at the mission decided her.<sup>68</sup> She could be seen as reconceptualising the key ‘sacred spaces’ for mission effort – re-prioritising church life over the links between church and school (which Maud and Chilton sought to bolster), or links between home and church, the sphere of Deaconess Julia.

Hannah’s theological training was soon put to good use as she took a far-sighted initiative which shows up changing attitudes to female leadership even in the very male-dominated Anglican structure. Wanting to leave some lasting heritage when Lady Selborne was destroyed in the interests of urban segregation, and with the bishop’s encouragement, Stanton began using the Tumelong settlement to give a handful of African women intensive residential theological training, both biblical and practical. This was over half a century after the CR began training African men for ordination – but African clergy wives had long assumed, as in other denominations, important leadership roles in the

67 Butler, *The Prophetic Nun*, p. 54, quoting N. Mosley, *The Life of Raymond Raynes*, London 1961.

68 See Stanton, *Go Well* (note 40), Ch. 3.

weekly prayer meetings and regional organisation of women's groups, as if they (unofficially) shared their husbands' ordained status. For Tumelong's course, women were there on their own merits, not through marital endowment. The spiritual demands were as rigorous as the academic.<sup>69</sup> However, Stanton's arrest under the March 1960 State of Emergency brought the venture, with its potential space of female religious collegiality, to an end.

## Conclusion

In a sense the wheel had come full circle: whereas Julia Gilpin before 1910 had been training scattered women converts fairly informally and unsystematically to lead the Women's Help Society branches over an extended area, Dorothy Maud and her friends had been edged out of such hands-on shaping of black adult female collective church life in their more concentrated youth-slanted work sphere by the 1930s, just as Frances Chilton felt she lacked entitlement to lead the Mothers' Union matrons. Yet by the late 1950s Hannah Stanton was once more working with individual women leaders – though they came to her and stayed to be trained rather than her itinerating out as happened earlier in the century, and the training was more formalised and academic, more like what black male clergy might have been receiving several decades before.

While the imparting of 'home' piety and domestic skills for African women and girls was an important thread throughout the period, and Dorothy Maud and Hannah Stanton each located their 'home' temporarily in an African area, the idea of 'away' helps encompass the sense of constant movement by both missionaries and converts, as well as the impact of the wider society beyond the African Christian home – which, in town, was often much beleaguered and all too fragile or impoverished.

Overall, the trajectories of these five women missionaries illustrate a range of new and significant institutional and ecclesiastical women-only spaces (as well as some 'co-ed' children's activities) opened up in the first half of the twentieth century to further Christianity among (especially) urban Africans. They contributed to the consolidation of a relatively strong individual and corporate black female spirituality, which appeared more intense and widespread than among their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the continuing 'separateness' of women's fervour within church life, much of the time, remained both a strength and a weakness.

British missionary spinsters helped carve out space and build actual places for black female faith to grow and develop in the southern Transvaal and southern Mozambique from 1907 to 1960, but the 'gender encounter' which ensued was generally more a cross-racial one between women from Britain and Africa as to what female faith might mean than a gender encounter with entrenched male power in the hope of transforming relations between the sexes. The Anglicanism of that era, as well as ingrained gender as-

69 Ibid., Ch. 8.

sumptions, socialisation and power relations, ensured that male priestly predominance and hierarchical church structures retained their grip, and women came together to learn more and express and organise themselves in the interstices of such bulwarks. Indeed, Meintjes argues that while women's space in mission communities 'created an arena for female solidarity', it constituted at the same time 'a formidable means of social control for any woman who might balk at the constraints'.<sup>70</sup>

Despite such gender disequilibrium, African women drew personal and group strength from their faith and helped their communities hold together in the more difficult times to come, until the worst of apartheid had been survived, if not yet altogether surmounted. Indeed, in a final twist of the space metaphor, it is worth drawing on a vignette study of everyday sources of African American female spiritual strength for survival.<sup>71</sup> Fayth Parks uses the term 'sacred daily life' to identify 'a psychological space... imbued with spiritual values' where black women 'can exist and find, renew, and reclaim Self', via 'an alternative consciousness that guards against annihilation'. Many black Anglican women in South Africa have likewise sought to 'create, nurture, and sustain self, family, and community' by means of such spiritual values as 'the basis of reasoning and action'.<sup>72</sup> For all their flaws and human limitations, missionaries such as the five on whom I focus helped in that process and contributed to the rooting in daily life of spiritual space for 'a gospel in which hope outlives despair'.<sup>73</sup>

70 Meintjes, *Family and Gender* (note 35), p. 145.

71 F.M. Parks, *Standing their Ground: Black Women's Sacred Daily Life*, in C. Higgs/B.A. Moss/E.R. Ferguson (eds), *Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas*, Athens, Ohio 2002, pp. 158-169.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 159.