



Traditions & Beliefs

A Quarterly Publication of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)

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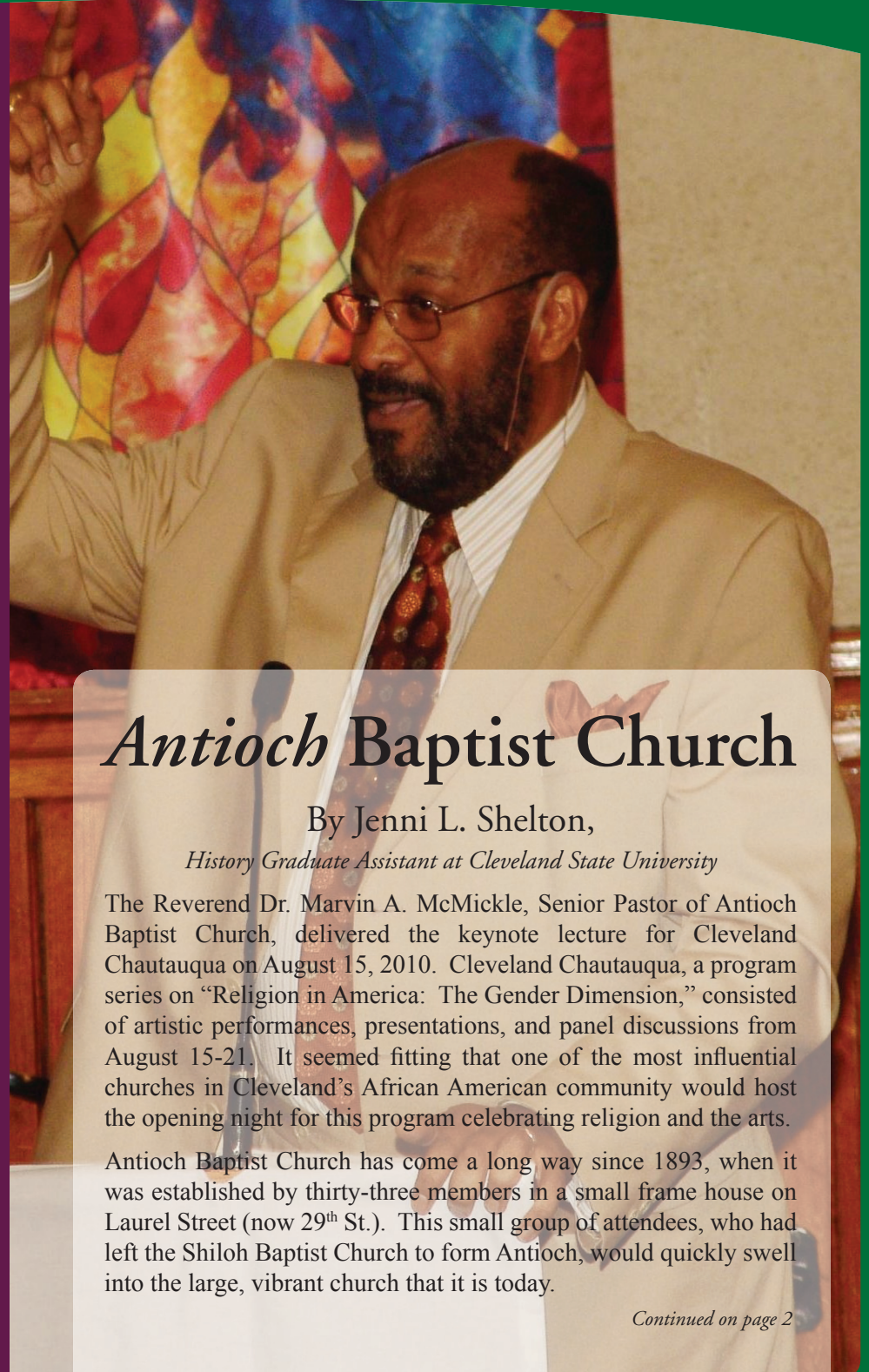
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Antioch Baptist Church

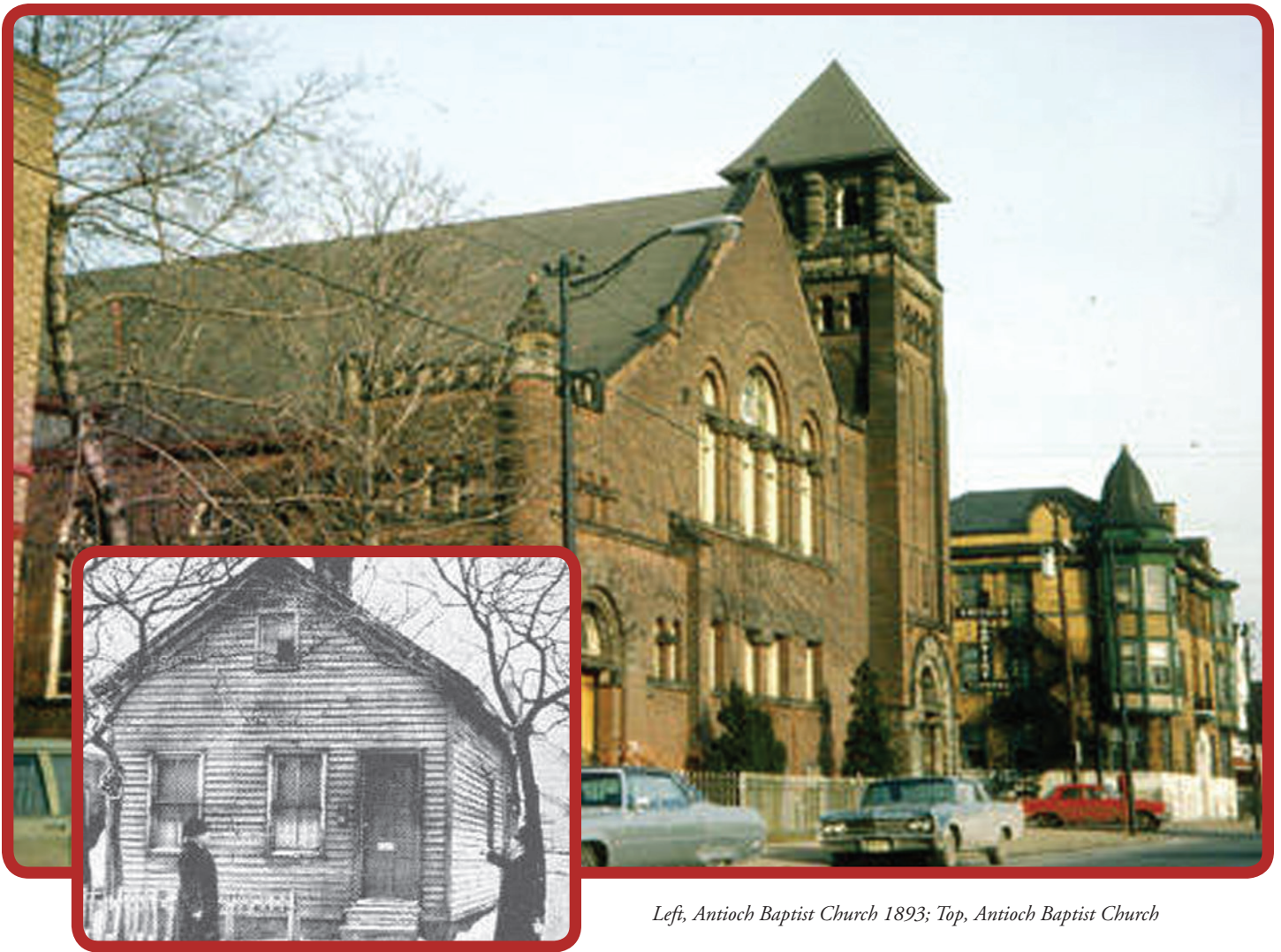
By Jenni L. Shelton,

History Graduate Assistant at Cleveland State University

The Reverend Dr. Marvin A. McMickle, Senior Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, delivered the keynote lecture for Cleveland Chautauqua on August 15, 2010. Cleveland Chautauqua, a program series on "Religion in America: The Gender Dimension," consisted of artistic performances, presentations, and panel discussions from August 15-21. It seemed fitting that one of the most influential churches in Cleveland's African American community would host the opening night for this program celebrating religion and the arts.

Antioch Baptist Church has come a long way since 1893, when it was established by thirty-three members in a small frame house on Laurel Street (now 29th St.). This small group of attendees, who had left the Shiloh Baptist Church to form Antioch, would quickly swell into the large, vibrant church that it is today.

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Left, Antioch Baptist Church 1893; Top, Antioch Baptist Church

In 1905, under the leadership of Reverend Horace C. Bailey, Antioch secured a \$16,000 mortgage, with the patronage of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., in order to build a much larger church home. During his time at Antioch, Reverend Bailey promoted interracial cooperation with the Northern Baptist Convention and the Baptist City Mission Society, making Antioch the first African American church in Cleveland to forge connections with the white Baptist ministries.¹

Reverend Bailey began a youth ministry and bought several buildings next to the church in order to found a recreation center. He also helped organize the Guild Girls, which encouraged women to go on mission trips throughout the world. By the 1920s, Antioch was a thriving church, with a church membership of 1,200.

The Reverend Wade Hampton McKinney, who was one the most memorable leaders in Antioch's history, became the head pastor in 1928. It was under his leadership that the church built its present home at 8869 Cedar Avenue in 1934. The church secured a mortgage of \$18,850, and paid it off

in only seven years.² In 1941 the congregation assembled to burn the mortgage in celebration.³ It was at this time that the church became an economic leader in its community. In 1947 members of the church organized a Credit Union. Antioch also provided financial support for other neighborhood churches in times of need, and supported the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Under Reverend McKinney, the church continued to support youth. In 1959, the newly constructed Youth Center was dedicated to and named for Reverend McKinney. This Youth Center had 22 classrooms as well as recreational space. Both Reverend and Mrs. McKinney dedicated their lives to promoting youth services and made youth programs an important part of their church ministry. Reverend McKinney's wife, Ruth Berry McKinney, was a teacher at the Church School for 25 years, and she directed the Young People's Choir for 33 years. Under the McKinneys, the church grew to a population of over 3,000 by the 1960s.



Top, Antioch Baptist Church, McKinney Youth Center; Right, Reverend Dr. Wade H. McKinney

After Reverend McKinney retired, the Reverend Dr. Emanuel Branch Jr. became the lead pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in 1964, and he served until 1983. Under Reverend Branch, Antioch forged new partnerships with Cleveland Clinic, Citizens for Better Housing, and Fairfax Foundations. In response to the Hough riots in 1966, Reverend the church helped construct town homes as well as Antioch Towers, an apartment building for senior citizens.⁴

In 1987, Reverend McMickle became the senior pastor, and he continues to lead the church in its efforts to make a difference in the community. Antioch currently broadcasts sermons via radio and television, hosts meetings for Alcoholics Anonymous, and feeds the hungry around Cleveland with its Loaves and Fishes mission. As part of its ongoing effort to support the liturgical arts, Donna and Errin Berry began a Dance Ministry in 2000. For more information on this dance ministry, visit www.antiochpraisedance.com.

Antioch Baptist Church provided in-kind support for the first Cleveland Chautauqua, in addition to hosting its opening

event. Antioch has spent 117 years building and sustaining a community of faith and worship in Cleveland while working with others to improve the quality of life in this city. In the summer of 2010, it provided an ideal setting for a memorable celebration of great ideas and great art.

For more information on Cleveland Chautauqua, please see the related story and photographs on pages four and five.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Antioch Baptist Church, *75 years of service, Antioch Baptist Church Anniversary Booklet*, (Cleveland, 1968), 21. RASHAD wants to thank the department of Special Collections at Cleveland State’s Michael Schwartz Library for providing the documents and photographs that record the history of Antioch Baptist Church, one of the oldest African American churches in Cleveland.
- 2 Ibid., 22.
- 3 “Mortgage Burned by Baptist Church,” *Cleveland Press*, Dec. 1, 1941.
- 4 Regennia Williams, *Cleveland, Ohio* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2002), 25.

2010 Cleveland *Chautauqua*

By Regennia N. Williams

In August 2010, RASHAD hosted the first Cleveland Chautauqua programs at Antioch Baptist Church and Cleveland Public Library's Lake Shore Facility. Approximately 150 participant-observers took part in program activities, and our goal is to share the edited versions of the videotaped sessions with thousands of others via the Internet. When paired with the Cleveland Public Library's "Women in Religion" Recommended Booklist, these digital videos will likely be of interest to both students and educators. Our 2010 Cleveland Chautauqua Review publication will make it possible for our speakers to share their edited remarks and suggestions for further reading with other audiences.

Cleveland Chautauqua activities also have the potential to extend beyond the city's boundaries in other ways. On August 20, 2010, Mrs. June Sallee Antoine and Mr. Carey B. Yancey traveled with me to the Chautauqua Institution in New York. While there, we met with the Reverend Joan Brown Campbell, Director of the Institution's Religion Department. In keeping with a planning committee member's suggestion, we invited Reverend Campbell to join us in developing future Cleveland Chautauqua events and strengthening the ties between the New York and Ohio programs. Not only did Reverend Campbell express an interest in working with us, she even introduced us to Jane Campbell, her daughter and the former mayor of Cleveland!

This photo spread includes images from the summer 2010 program. After November 1st, the complete program booklet and other photos will be available on line at www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray, under "Recent Additions." For more information on the preliminary plans for Cleveland Chautauqua 2011, call (216) 523-7182 or write to r.williams@csuohio.edu.

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Fulbright Memories from Nigeria

By Regennia N. Williams

In describing the proposed research activities for my Fulbright Fellowship in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, I included the following statement in the Winter / Spring 2010 issue of this publication:

“[A]ccording to Yoruba oral traditions, the world began at Ile-Ife. There are many artistic traditions associated with Yoruba religion, Ile-Ife, and the Osun state, which is named for a goddess (an Orisa) in the Yoruba belief system. For all of the above reasons, Ile-Ife is an ideal place to study and teach about the role of religion in history, with special emphasis on the experiences of women.”

In this issue, I am happy to report that my Fulbright experience proved to be more rewarding than I could ever have imagined.

After landing in Lagos on Friday, January 29, 2010—and spending the weekend in the American Guest Quarters—I traveled to the campus of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) on February 2, 2010. My first order of business involved making revisions to the interview protocol for RASHAD’s Praying Grounds Oral History Project, so that I could make use of this document in international settings. With the approval of CSU’s Institutional Review Board, I then started to conduct oral history interviews and collect personal narratives and other documents from Nigerian Christians (Protestant and Catholic), Muslims, and Yoruba practitioners.

Two post-graduate research assistants at OAU provided invaluable support for my work, and I have already made plans for a follow-up research project on religious culture in Ile-Ife, “Sacred Orature, Literature, and Performance: The Evidence of Things Seen and Heard in Yorubaland and African America, c. 1950 to the Present.”

My stay at OAU included lots of quiet time for library research and writing. This made it possible for me to prepare and present a paper at an international conference on “Migration and Settlement Patterns in Yorubaland.” I am in the process of revising that paper for possible publication in the peer-reviewed conference proceedings.





The Fulbright Fellowship also made it possible for me to devote a substantial amount of time to editorial activities for the following publications: the charter issue of RASHAD's Journal of Traditions & Beliefs, the Winter/Spring 2010 issue of the Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter, In the Spirit of Teaching: An Online Educator's Guide, and Through the Lens of Allen E. Cole: A History of African Americans in Cleveland, Ohio.

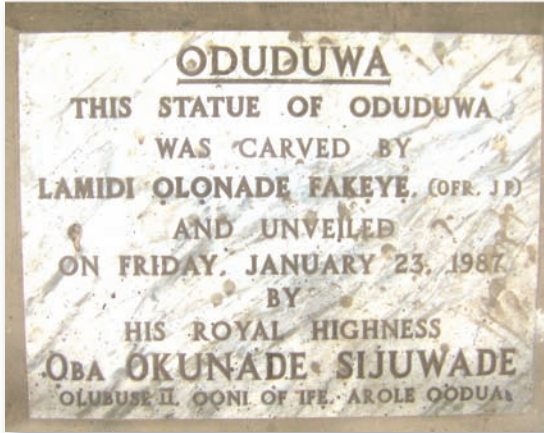
I am currently co-editing a special 2010 issue of The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs with a colleague in OAU's Department of English, Dr. Taiwo Soneye. A Fulbright Senior Specialist in OAU's Faculty of Education, Dr. James Etim, also invited me to contribute an article to the peer-reviewed journal for which he serves as editor, The Review of Higher Education in Africa.

Many of my Nigerian students and colleagues at OAU expressed great interest in African American sacred music, and the founder and director of the campus radio station facilitated my writing and production of a seven-program radio series, "In the Spirit: A Retrospective Look at African American Sacred Music," for Great FM 94.5 at OAU. Members of the campus community also joined me in coordinating and implementing plans for "Lessons from the Field," a June 11, 2010 Fulbright forum for OAU faculties and students, which attracted over 80 people.

Within the Department of History and the Faculty of Arts, I revised the syllabus for and then taught "History of African Peoples in the Diaspora" (HIS307) and implemented the use of Turnitin.com, a web-based course management and plagiarism prevention program. I participated in meetings of the History Department Faculty and the Faculty Council for the college, and I had the opportunity to attend a conference on "Gender and Language in an African Setting" hosted by my dean, Prof. Yisa Yusuf.

I engaged in numerous healthy cultural exchanges as a member of the choir at All Souls Chapel, a Protestant church on the OAU campus, and while attending my first Nigerian funeral / Christian homegoing celebration, a Muslim baby-naming ceremony, and four weddings. I must say, however, that I also experienced a few cultural shocks, especially in my dealings with the shrewd entrepreneurs known as Nigerian market women, and in trying to adjust to the sporadic Internet and electrical service.

Nevertheless, as the pictures here suggest, there are many wonderful things to see and do in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and I encourage both faculty and students alike to learn more about Nigeria and the other countries that participate in the Fulbright program.



Cleveland Chautauqua Sequels and Prequels *Celebrating Great Ideas, Great Art, and a Great Lake*

Leonard Gregory Burks, National Music Director for the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, and

Emi Fujisaki, internationally acclaimed choral director and vocal coach from Japan, joined other presenters and performing artists from Cleveland and Tokyo in launching RASHAD's 2010-2011 program series, Cleveland Chautauqua Sequels and Prequels. The two-day international gospel music seminar held on September 20 and 21 attracted nearly 100 people to Trinity Cathedral, and the photos on pages eight and nine include presenters and other participants in that seminar.

On October 15, George Davis, Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University, delivered a lecture in CSU's Main Classroom Auditorium, "Until We Got Here: A Griot's History of the 1960s." While on campus, Davis also participated in a breakfast table discussion with student in Dr. Regennia N. Williams' Local History Seminar class. Davis's visit was made possible with support from the Department of History.

Upcoming events for this academic year include the following:

Paint Out Loud: Art and Life in 'Post-Racial' America

Featuring Neal Hamilton, Visual Artist
Main Classroom Building, Room 406
Monday, October 25, 2010, 12:15 p.m.

RASHAD's Fall Open House and Reception

Trinity Cathedral, Cathedral Hall
Monday, October 25, 2010, 5-8 p.m.

**Light Refreshments and Free Admission!*

**The Main Classroom Building and Trinity Cathedral are located on Euclid Avenue at East 22nd Street.*



Coming in 2011-2012. . .

Watching God and Reading Hurston

As the 75th anniversary of the publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* approaches (September 18, 2012), RASHAD is working with supporters of Cleveland Chautauqua to assemble a local team of book lovers, scholars, and others who will help plan an anniversary celebration befitting Hurston and including activities designed to encourage young people to read other books by and about Hurston. This program series would build on the success of Cleveland's 2002 Langston Hughes Centennial Celebration, which earned Northern Ohio Live's Award of Achievement for Community Events and drew national attention to the writer's Cleveland connections. Hughes and Hurston were colleagues during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, and they had some interesting encounters with Clevelanders at the Karamu House Theatre in the 1930s. It seems very appropriate, therefore, that Clevelanders take the lead in launching a celebration that highlights Hurston's monumental contributions to arts and letters.

For more information on the preliminary plans for this program series, call (216) 523-7182 or write to r.williams@csuohio.edu.



Please plan to attend the
Fall Open House for the “Praying Grounds” Oral History Project
and
The Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the
History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)
on
Monday, October 25, 2010

Paint Out Loud:
Art and Life in ‘Post-Racial’ America

Neal Hamilton, Visual Artist
CSU, Main Classroom Building
Euclid Avenue at East 22nd Street
Room 406, 12:15 p.m.

**Presented with support from*
The Department of History

Reception and Information Fair

Trinity Cathedral, Cathedral Hall
2230 Euclid Avenue
5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Light Refreshments & Free Admission!

For more information,
call (216) 523-7182.



Praying Grounds

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE: GIFTS THAT ARE ALWAYS WORTH GIVING!

For more information on how you can support the
Praying Grounds Oral History Project or other RASHAD activities,

Call (216) 523-7182

or

Write to r.williams@csuohio.edu.

Cleveland State University—Department of History - 2121 Euclid Avenue, RT 1308 - Cleveland, Ohio 44115



Dr. Regennia N. Williams (center) and some members of the audience after an October 7, 2010 presentation in Black Studies. The talk, “Nigerian Altars and American Praying Grounds: Narrative Histories and Inter-Religious Dialogues in the 21st Century,” focused on the Praying Grounds Oral History Project and related research in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

RASHAD

Initiative for the Study of Religion
and Spirituality in the History of
Africa and the Diaspora

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African Religions & Philosophy:

**Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the
Reverend Dr. John S. Mbiti's Landmark Publication**

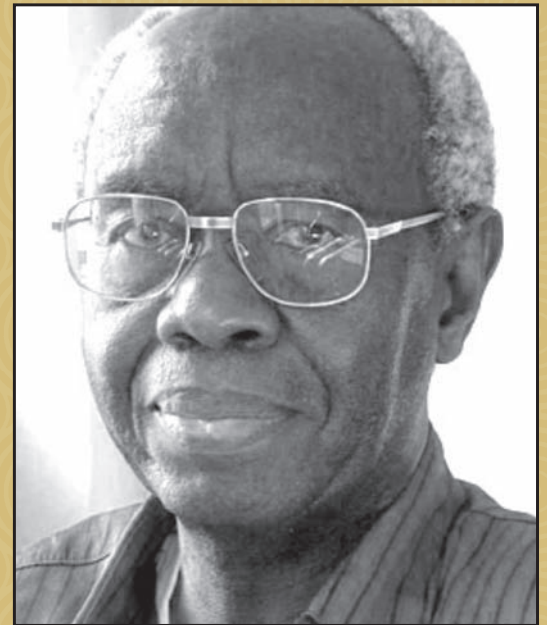
A Special Issue of **The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs**

“Since people are so intimately bound up with their religious life and outlook, their history constitutes the history of their religion. This is an area of study which calls for interdisciplinary cooperation between historians, anthropologists, and theologians.”

— Rev. John S. Mbiti, Ph.D., 1969

From the introduction to *African Religions and Philosophy*

Available December 2010



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