



CATHERINE "GEWE" MULGRAVE - JAMAICAN MISSIONARY TO GHANA

Stolen from Angola, freed in Jamaica, missionary to Ghana

Catherine Mulgrave was born with the name "Gewe" in Luanda, Angola in 1827. Some say her father was a prince, and others say he was a respected African Christian merchant with European influences. Her mother was from a Christian family, probably of mixed Portuguese and African descent. When she was about five years old, she and her cousin were abducted by Portuguese slave traders, carried off to the slave ship *Heroina*, and kept in the captain's cabin for the planned trip to Havana, Cuba. A few weeks later, the ship dashed against a rock in a storm, and sank off the coast of Jamaica. She and her cousin were adopted by the Governor of Jamaica and his wife, as the children were under five and therefore freed under the Apprenticeship Act which had only been put into law that year. The abolishment of slavery in Jamaica was underway and came into full effect the next year.

The Moravian Church endeavored to educate liberated slaves, and Gewe, then renamed Catherine after the Governor's wife, was sent to boarding school with her cousin. She finished there and went on for teacher training. At age 16, Catherine married George Peter Thompson, a member of the team from the Basel Mission who came to recruit Jamaican missionaries for work in Ghana. She joined the team for the voyage and suffered a miscarriage during the passage. She had two more children soon after arriving in Ghana.

Catherine and George were sent out to the coast to start an English-language school. They opened a boys' boarding school first, then Mulgrave became the founder of the girls' school. It became apparent, as the years passed, that George was frequently unfaithful to his wife, and finally in 1849, with the approval of the mission, she divorced him. In 1851, Catherine married German missionary Johannes Zimmerman, a Bible translator who rendered the Bible into the Ga language. They went on to have six children together and their descendants live in Ghana today.

Catherine Mulgrave was known as having a "gifted mind" and "decided piety" and was known as a capable administrator and leader. She was the Basel mission's first female teacher and founded more than one girls' school as well as holding prayer meetings, practicing hospitality, and seeking to empower women through education and evangelism. She died in 1891 and was buried in Accra.

Sources:

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