

**Missions:  
Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Many an average Christian citizen of former colonies that have hosted foreign missionaries wonders about the role these missionaries have played with respect to colonialism. He does not know many details about this matter, but he has heard and read enough to suspect that foreign missionaries are not to be trusted fully. He may appreciate having had the Gospel brought to his country, but he still looks at most missionaries with a degree of doubt. He may even wonder about the relationships of missionaries with the forces of neo-colonialism today. It is hoped that this study will help such a citizen to fill in the details not only, but also to become more aware of his own understanding of the Gospel. *The average Christian citizen has inherited a version of the Christian faith that has some fatal weaknesses that render the Christian community as a whole spiritually powerless vis a vis economic, political and other realities.*

The average Christian citizen of Western nations is aware that missionaries are not welcome in some poor nations and is puzzled by this situation. He resents the vague charges of missionary collusion with colonialism. Missionaries are not politicians! They bring the Gospel – finish. Besides, was colonialism not a good thing for “these people?” Did the West not rescue them from barbarism? And what is “neo-colonialism” anyway, except a diabolical slogan of Communism invented to discredit the West’s saintly intentions? The term is an invention of Satan himself to prevent the spread of the Gospel. The

intention of this study is not merely to indicate the role of missions with respect to colonialism, but to help such citizens understand the ambiguity of the church's role in these matters. *It is also hoped that such new understanding will contribute to a willingness to consider alternatives especially in economic behavior.* The need for such alternatives is crucial, not only for Western Christians, but just as much for their counterparts in the poor countries.

A number of questions led up to this study. Years ago, as a young missionary, I was puzzled by occasional unsubstantiated charges in the Nigerian press of missionary links with colonialism. Furthermore, I was dismayed by the tradition of fear for politics that, until recently, was so strong in the Nigerian Christian community. I was surprised at how openly Nigerian Christians tend to separate their religion from the daily affairs of business, politics and professional life. Though such separation is not new among Christians, how could this have come about in a Christian community that arose out of the bosom of African traditional religions, none of which, we are told repeatedly, separate religion and culture? I decided that a study of the relationship between missions and colonialism would provide at least some keys to these questions.

Recently I wrote a rather big book entitled *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Sudan United Mission*, of which this book is a popular summary, *with the exception of Chapter Nine which is original in this book.* It is a case study of the Sudan United Mission, a British Evangelical non-denominational mission in the north of Nigeria. This study deals primarily with the mission's stand on colonialism and related politico-economic concerns.

Since the SUM – this is the way we will refer to this mission – was particularly weak in this area of concern, this study tends to emphasize weaknesses rather than the mission's strength. I emphasize at this point, however, that had a complete history been written of the SUM, the story would have been much more positive than it is now. The deep respect and love I have for the SUM cannot be undone because of serious weaknesses in certain areas. And when one compares the results of the mission's work to that of other Western organizations in Nigeria, one's respect can only increase still further.

However, as it is, I write about certain weaknesses of the SUM not because I prefer to dwell on negatives, but because this study seeks to contribute to the well-being of the Christian church as a whole, both that of the West and of the South. At a time when economic concerns preoccupy men's minds, the church needs to have a clear notion as to the relevant teachings of the Bible. Weakness and wavering at this point in history will portray the Gospel itself as weak and wavering or as irrelevant. There is no doubt in my mind that both the Western and Nigerian church find themselves in that precise danger at the moment.

We have selected the SUM for a variety of reasons. One is that the mission has her roots in the same country as those who colonized Nigeria. Thus, one has every reason to expect that she would understand colonial officers better than missions from other countries. In fact, the SUM was aware of her unique position in this respect. Secondly, the other Protestant missions that joined her efforts looked to her for leadership in relations with the government. Finally, the SUM is very typical of Evangelical missions in general. Her

official magazine, *The Lightbearer*, contained numerous articles by missionaries of other Evangelical missions, one of the many indications of her unity of spirit with the *Evangelical* community. Chapter Three of the original study provides massive evidence of this unity. One has perfect justification to generalize from the behaviour and thinking of the SUM to the Evangelical community as a whole, though one must always do so with care.

Most of the study is concerned with demonstrating weakness in the Western church, but the Nigerian church is equally so burdened. Nigeria as a whole is establishing new national patterns. At such a critical time a country needs the light of the full Gospel with renewed urgency. I have long been deeply distressed that the church in Nigeria has been so ill prepared to provide positive and creative leadership at such a critical moment. She appeared to have little to offer beyond moral platitudes that have no power. There was little prophetic criticism, let alone passion, within her bosom. When synods, conventions or church leaders did express themselves critically, the message was usually couched in harmless pronouncements that by their very style reflected the elitist orientation of the authors. And after the church had thus relieved her collective conscience, it was back to business as usual. Respectable sounding warnings about the increasing gap between poor and rich were never backed up by the drastic actions required to change the situation described. Her obvious duty had once again been performed, but without prophetic intentions or power.

Some Christian organizations in the country are more concerned with planning national secretariats and other prestigious buildings for the benefit of the elite and foreign visitors than they are with planning for

social justice and empowering the poor to claim their rights. Some denominations are so elitist oriented that they do not even bother to conduct their business in languages their peasant members can understand – except when the latter sporadically insist on their rights, a situation that occurs all too seldom. The church leader is drawn more to the senator than to the peasant. Of course, if you want to build prestigious facilities, one is more likely to receive aid from the former than the latter. The entire educational system of the country is designed, intentionally or otherwise, to produce just such a mentality.

The church in northern Nigeria is increasingly becoming a pressure group for her right to existence. There is no doubt that the church needs to be on her defensive toes, for there are genuine threats. However, one would wish that her zeal for her own safety would be matched with an equally prophetic zeal for the poor; that her increasingly radical insistence on her own rights would be matched by an equally radical programme for the rights of the poor. One would desire that the beautifully worded and respectable pronouncements be matched with the will to change the situations denounced. However, this would require making a rather clean break with her attachment to the elite – to herself! We are talking about thorough-going conversion. We are talking about the Biblical teaching that real life is gained only when one is prepared to lose it. A revolutionary re-thinking of the place of wealth, work and power is overdue in the Christian community. The Word of God with respect to oppression needs to be clearly heard first *within* the church. The capitalist orientation of missions has indeed taken its toll.

The above paragraphs are less accusation than lament. A main point of this study is that this situation has arisen at least partially because

of the way the Gospel was brought. However, a basic assumption is that, since the Nigerian church is now independent, she can no longer hide behind the excuse of missionary mistakes. She is in a position to reform herself with the power of the Holy Spirit. This volume is meant to contribute to that end. May it so be understood and may the Spirit of God so use it. It is our prayer that the partial re-run we seem to be witnessing in Nigeria of the nineteenth-century church in Britain as described in Chapter One may be stopped before the entire reel is run off.

A most unusual feature of this book is that it takes us right up to 1960. Most studies based on mission archives have to stop much earlier than that, for missions tend to hesitate opening up their more recent archives to the student. There is too much personal information in the files that could, if not handled ethically, lead to embarrassment. However, the SUM generously and courageously opened up her archives for this one single effort right up to the time of Nigerian independence in 1960.

In closing this Introduction, I am happy to acknowledge that since the year of the original publication, many things I write about in this book have taken a turn for the better. Nigerian churches are more proactive than before and they stand up to the Muslim challenge with a resoluteness not seen earlier. In fact, it is probable that current challenges posed by the Muslim community have pushed the major concerns of this book a little away from the centre towards the periphery, at least for Christians in the Middle Belt and North. Nevertheless, many of the problems are still there and still need to be addressed, though perhaps in a different guise due to changed circumstances. The dualistic worldview inherited from missionaries

still underlies the definition of religion with which most Christians oppose Islam. The details of this claim have been fully described in my later series *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations* (See my Islamica page on [www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com) and/or [www.lulu.com/janhboer](http://www.lulu.com/janhboer)).

## BACKGROUND NOTE

This book is a summary of my doctoral dissertation. Since it is a popular book rather than academic, there are no footnotes or endnotes. Those materials are kept to a minimum and are found in parentheses following the material to which they refer.

The *form* of these parenthesized notes are also kept to a minimum, with only the last name of the writer and the page number. If the situation demands more than this minimal, it is supplied. Most of the notes refer to the original dissertation and read like “(Boer, 154).” Complete information about the books can be found in the Bibliography.

Furthermore, in the original dissertation the facts are all backed up by referrals to the original or secondary sources. In this book, I make few such references. If you really want those, you will have to go to that original. I have observed that copies are available on the internet. Here I refer mostly only to the pagination of the original where the documentation can be located and traced. This is, after all, a popular publication, not academic.

This is a second, revised, corrected and somewhat updated version of the 1984 original.

Though this volume is a summary of a larger dissertation, it is also the first in a series of three dealing with economic and business issues from a Christian perspective. The other two are:

*The Church & the External Debt*, 1992, (Editor)

*Caught in the Middle: Christians in Transnational Corporations*,  
1992.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Colonialism in Nigeria**

**Our intention for this chapter is to trace the beginning of colonialism in Nigeria, its subsequent development, and its final result by the time Nigeria gained her independence in 1960. It was only sixty years before that date, January 1, 1900, that the British flag was hoisted and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria proclaimed. What, we will ask, led up to that event and what were the main motives? Once we have accomplished this task, we will in effect have described the economic context in which the SUM carried out its mandate.**

**During the days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the British seaport of Liverpool had come to depend almost entirely on that trade for their economic existence. They had developed relations with a Nigerian people known as Brassmen. These Brassmen were the middlemen for Liverpool interests. They would buy up their fellow Africans in the interior and sell them to the European traders on the coast of what is now Nigeria.**

**After the abolition of the slave trade, the partnership between these two parties was not dissolved. Only the items of trade changed. Instead of slaves, Liverpool was now interested in palm oil, ivory, timber, beeswax and a number of other products. Between the two of them, these parties enjoyed a monopoly on the coastal trade with the interior and each knew his place.**

Other interested groups noticed that the post-abolition trade with the interior was very profitable and thus new companies began to find ways of bypassing the Brassmen to gain direct access to the interior. While Liverpool and the Brassmen naturally opposed such attempts, there was wide support for the move in other quarters. The people from the interior themselves welcomed this new development. In Britain, both government and the public similarly favoured the new direction. Under the influence of Livingstone, of whom we will hear more in a later chapter, and other explorers, many Europeans had become interested in the terrible slave trade that continued in the interior, conducted this time not by or with Europeans, but by Fulani and Arabic peoples. These Europeans felt that this interior slave trade could be undermined only by replacing it with so-called “legitimate commerce.”

The stage was set for a long and sordid story of cut-throat competition between the traditional Liverpool-Brassmen alliance and the newcomers. Liverpool interests joined with their counterparts in Bristol and London to form the African Association to protect their interests. The new arrivals, however, found it difficult to cooperate or to arrive at a common policy regarding their relationship to the local peoples. By 1878, four major companies had emerged among the newcomers, but the local people as well as the Liverpool-Brassmen alliance were able to exploit their disunity and harassed them constantly. Though it was against the tradition of the British government to interfere in commercial affairs, it was forced by circumstances to offer increasing protection to the new arrivals.

At this point George Goldie appeared on the scene. He was a convinced atheist and known for his “licentious and irresponsible

character.” He was able to amalgamate most of the newer companies into the United Africa Company in 1879, thus creating a monopoly in the interior. He imported firearms and cheap gin into Nigeria in exchange for the tropical products needed in Britain. It looked as if the disarray had been overcome and a semblance of commercial order established in the interior.

New threats appeared. French and German commercial interests entered the area of Goldie’s operations. In order to contain this threat to British interests, he appealed to the British government to grant his company charter power. That is to say, he wanted the British government to grant him the “legal” power to rule the area in the way other colonial companies ruled in certain Asian countries. The government at first refused to grant that power, but it did permit Goldie to arrange treaties with local chiefs, treaties that would give the company exclusive trading rights within the area of a chief’s jurisdiction in exchange for an annual fee.

Continued danger from other foreign interests and disarray between Goldie’s company and the Brassmen led to such confusion that British commerce was seriously threatened. In recognition of his successful efforts, the British government finally did grant his company charter power. The firm was renamed “Royal Niger Company.” Although the terms of the charter included insistence on free trade for any interested party regardless of its nationality, Goldie disregarded all such limitations and engaged in the most ruthless methods to undermine all competition, whether African, British or other Europeans. Physical force and violence, military strategies, tariff barriers and other “legalities” were devised to make the entry of any other party nearly impossible.

Liverpool interests, represented by the African Association, did all they could to wage serious economic war with the Niger Company, but the latter won out. African traders suffered even more under Goldie's politics. They usually lacked the British currency demanded for tariffs and license. Many were illiterate and could not fill in the required forms. Furthermore, the company reduced prices paid to Africans to levels below those paid in adjacent areas where their monopoly was not in effect, bartered with useless goods of inferior quality, dismissed all senior Nigerians in the businesses they eliminated, and in short, impoverished the formerly wealthy African middlemen. All this is admitted in Lugard's Diaries. The increasing African resentment resulted in opposition from the "meanest Lagos hawker ... to the wealthiest Liverpool merchant or ship owner" (Flint, 155). Several times the company's stations were attacked by the victimized Africans. The company would respond with actual bombardment of the responsible communities.

The race among various European groups to establish as many treaties as possible heated up. These treaties often could not stand close scrutiny. The Niger Company would often forge them. Goldie instructed Lugard "in places where the French pretend that they have made treaties, to obtain a written declaration from the rulers that such statements were false, and then to make treaties for us." Lugard was also ordered to "urge on all chiefs of influence the importance to them of Europeans bringing goods to their countries, which can only be done if they sign the treaties."

Lugard himself disliked these treaties as unworthy of British tradition; they only served to soothe men's conscience. It was pretended that the rulers had "voluntarily ceded all their sovereign rights." The

translators were often semi-literates who could hardly translate them. The rulers did not understand their import. In fact, the Sultan of Sokoto “saw the payment as tribute from a vassal.” Lugard confessed that the end justified the means; open force would have been more honest. The final results of these treaties were quite the opposite from initial African expectations. In Bauchi Province, even a low yearly revenue would be more than five times the annual subsidy paid by the company. One chief expressed that he had expected to “become fat,” but eventually he “shrunk up and became dry.” In spite of his misgivings, Lugard did publicly defend the validity of the treaties.

The prevailing unrest was not conducive to trade. French interests were now being backed by their government. It was impossible for a charter company with responsibilities to shareholders wanting a profit, to produce an army sufficient to cope with the situation. There was real danger of war. That dangerous situation, combined with the numerous complaints received by the government in London as to the behavior of the company, finally led to the revoking of the charter. The British government decided to take over the administration of the area. Lugard hoisted the imperial flag and declared the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria with himself as its first High Commissioner. The company continued until it was sold to Unilever some twenty years later for eight million pounds.

It is important to note that the government took over only when it was forced to do so to protect British commercial interests. The philosophy of capitalism was widely held and it prevented the government from intervention. In fact, there are cases on record where serious recommendations were made for a reduction of

governmental presence in Africa. Particularly in the case of West Africa, British interest was primarily economic, not political. The political arm appeared only when it became clear that commercial interests were threatened. It was this economic concern that forced a reluctant Britain to establish her administration. She had little choice but to create and/or safeguard necessary conditions for trade.

It should be understood that we are emphasizing the economic motive as the *primary* one in the establishment of colonialism in Nigeria, though we are not suggesting that the economic motive was the *only* one. In this insistence we are by no means alone. There is an impressive array of capitalists, Marxists, Christians, politicians, sociologists, economists and theologians, Africans and Westerners, who find themselves agreeing with each other on this point. Cecil Rhodes, the British colonial architect of East Africa, once attended a meeting of London's unemployed at which he heard

wild speeches, which were just a cry for "bread," "bread," "bread," and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism.... My cherished ambition is a solution for the social problem, i.e. in order to save ... the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war. We colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population to provide new markets for the goods produced by them in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists (Lenin, 31; Duignan and Gann, IV, 673).

Lugard, Rhodes' counterpart in Nigeria, similarly acknowledged this primary motive. Britain needed raw materials for her industries and markets for her finished products. "Who can deny the right of the hungry people of Europe to utilize the wasted bounties of nature?" he asked. To deny this thesis, he wrote, would be absurd. "The partition of Africa was ... due primarily to the economic necessity ... to meet the needs of Europe" (Perham and Bull, 92, 615, 613). Of all people, these two should know!

Lugard called his own theory of colonialism the "dual mandate." This dual mandate consisted of the advancement of both Africa and Britain by developing African resources and to improve her civilization. In keeping with orthodox capitalist doctrine of the day, he believed that free commerce and competition would eventually result in the greatest good for all the parties concerned. He expected that Nigeria would gradually move from being a supplier of raw materials to that of a manufacturing community. With his own experience under the ruthless Niger Company as background, Lugard bitterly opposed the formation of monopolies. He knew they would end up restricting trade, suppressing small firms and increasing profits at the expense of Africans. In spite of all of this, he saw the role of his colonial government as simply encouraging the right conditions under which *mutually* profitable trade could be carried on peacefully. Flora Shaw, Lugard's wife, summarized the object of the administration as follows:

to promote prosperity by the peaceful organization of the country under just laws, the maintenance of order, and the opening of communication with the outer world. When these objects have been attained, the administration may be regarded as having done its part. It holds the field in the interest alike of

**the native and the European. It is for European trade itself to do the rest (Shaw, 495).**

**Though Lugard had high expectations of colonialism for Africa, already during his own administration it was clear that negative factors were dominant. He disliked the common practice of importing all needed manufactured goods as boding evil for the future. He acknowledged with regret the emphasis on very large profits for the British, while Nigerian producers were getting less and less. He was aware of the fact that British shipping lines refused to allow Nigerian exporters sufficient space for their cargo. However, his philosophy of free enterprise prevented him from doing anything about such problems. British firms began to make cartel arrangements amongst themselves in order to reduce their payment to Africans to a minimum.**

**In spite of Lugard's doctrine of free trade, his subordinates did not hesitate to manipulate the market in ways that heavily favoured Britain. Burrows, a high-ranking customs official, for example suggested that a number of budding indigenous industries in Nigeria be undermined by importing manufactured products from Britain and selling them at such low prices that the local industry would collapse. He wrote:**

**Cotton – The quantity required for local manufactures will be reduced if prices of imported cotton cloths are cheapened by a lowered cost in the market of export as well as by reduced transport rates and improved transport arrangements.**

**Hides and Skins – The cheapening of imported leather manufactures and their wider circulation throughout the country will reduce the quantity required for local use.**

**Oleaginous nuts, seeds, and produce – Supplies of cheap kerosene and soap will reduce the quantity required for local use.**

**And Burrows was not the only one to offer such ominous suggestions.**

**No matter where the British turned, their efforts always ended up in favour of their own country, though occasionally all parties seemed to be on the losing side. There was a native tin mining industry on the Jos Plateau, but foreign companies squeezed the local efforts out of existence. During the first decade of this century, at least eighty-two mining companies had made their debut in Northern Nigeria, but it was clearly a sordid process in the interest of neither Nigerian nor British. Lying and swindling, false claims, mortifying working conditions so that young British employees died, improper involvement of former civil servants and more such were common.**

**Similarly, the railway industry boomed – but only where it was in the interest of British economic development. The needs of Nigerians themselves never entered the picture, least of all their social needs. It was simply a matter of bringing certain products from the interior to the harbor for export primarily to Britain and, of course, for sending finished products back into the interior. Officials were conscious of an additional blessing: by re-routing interior products south along the railway, they were also effectively cutting northern Nigeria's traditional ties with North Africa by camel train across the Sahara. Indeed, no mean achievement!**

**In spite of these problems, Lugard retained his optimistic expectations. Some twenty years later, he summarized his own achievements as follows:**

... a higher civilization was brought into contact with barbarism with the inevitable result ... that boundaries were enlarged in the effort to protect the weak ..., to extend the rule of justice and liberty, to protect traders, settlers, and missions, and to check anarchy and bloodshed.... (Lugard, 613).

And again,

I am confident that the verdict of history will award high praise to the efforts and the achievements of Great Britain in the discharge of her responsibilities. For ... under no other rule – be it of his own uncontrolled potentates or of aliens – does the African enjoy such a measure of freedom and of impartial justice, or a more sympathetic treatment, and for that reason I am a profound believer in the British Empire and its mission in Africa (Lugard, 5).

Lugard expected that his countrymen would labour in Nigeria for some three generations, develop the country and leave it with Nigerians as their best trading partners. He was obviously not ashamed of being called a “colonialist.” Perham, one of his best friends, cautioned that the modern reader might see him as a “ruthless imperialist.” She commented that “he would, indeed, have claimed that then honourable title while disclaiming the adjective” (Perham, 13).

Nevertheless, Lugard sensed also the emergence of a new set of problems. In 1905, he predicted that

Beyond doubt the development of the resources of the tropics, and the relations of its peoples to European civilization will form

the greatest problem of the twentieth century. Its products are becoming more and more indispensable to the white races, forming as they do the raw materials for our most important industries.

This prediction sounds very much like the question raised by Lugard's contemporary, E.D. Morel, who wondered whether Britain's

ultimate action be as equally beneficial as the early stages have been, or will its interference be the medium through which evils, not of violence, but economic, and as great as the old, will slowly but certainly and subtly, eat into the hearts of those Nigerian homes and destroy their happiness, not of set purpose, but automatically, inevitably so? (Morel, 5-6).

Anyone acquainted with the Nigeria of the 1980s can sense something of the prophetic profundity of these statements.

#### **The Interim Years 1918-1945**

We have already indicated how the colonial government saw its role primarily as one of creating the necessary conditions for profitable trade. This basic policy remained in Africa during these interim years, even though at home the government moved away from such laissez-faire doctrine. During the height of the depression, the governor of Sierra Leone said,

It is the duty of every African Government, not to provide work for the workless, but so to govern that private enterprise is encouraged to do so; that trade is allowed to grow without hindrance; that business houses are given every facility and encouraged to start new productive works, and that the

inhabitants are helped to cultivate and utilize the soil (Crowder, 308).

This attitude spelled serious limitations on development. The main activities of the government consisted of collecting taxes, maintaining order, building transportation and communication facilities such as roads, railways and telegraph as prerequisites for modern economic activities. This policy in effect resulted in very one-sided development. It meant a limited educational system that was designed primarily to produce clerks and technicians for government and business. With such a limited educational purpose, it is no wonder that West African colonial governments as a whole spent very little on education. The same can be said of government efforts in medical care and agriculture. Most money was spent on railways and that was because private enterprise refused to take the initiative in spite of the fact that it represented their lifeline.

These developments, moreover, were restricted to only certain parts of the country; most of the population remained untouched by colonial development and continued along basically traditional patterns. This situation was no accident, of course, but inherent in a system that left the basic initiatives to private enterprise that was guided by the profit motive. Where the private sector was not interested – and we are speaking here mainly of expatriate firms – there the government had no reason to create the conditions for trade or development. To be sure, lack of money prevented development as well, but our point is that development was directed basically in the interests of foreign companies, and these companies did not even pay any taxes until 1939! African interests were clearly

subordinate to those of Europe. Economic interests dominated all others.

In some ways it can be said that the foreign companies were more in control than the government. There were no real labour laws or wage controls. Even currency was controlled by private banks rather than the government. Slowly conditions reverted back to pre-colonial days. The weaker companies were once again eliminated and the stronger ones formed monopolies. It has been said that monopoly was one of the most striking features of the inter-war period. In 1921, there were one hundred and four companies engaged in external commerce; by 1940, two-thirds of West African trade was conducted by seven firms! One of these, the United African Company, the product of the 1929 merger of the Niger Company with the African and Eastern Trade Corporation, handled some 40%! This company itself was a subsidiary of the Unilever octopus that controlled many companies throughout Africa. Cartels were formed that enjoyed official support.

We are concerned here not with the behavior of individual companies so much as with the direction the economy was taking. It was always the African who was the first to be eliminated. A number of cocoa producers in the 1930s sought to establish direct links with foreign manufacturers, but they were defeated by a conglomeration of companies and government efforts that we shall summarize shortly. While the people in Lagos at one time had extensive direct contact with external commercial firms, by the 1940s their share of external trade had been reduced to less than 5%. Crowder characterizes the period by “the ousting and consequent frustration of the African businessman from a share in the profits from the expansion of the economy that took place...” (Crowder, 353). The government was fully

aware of these developments, but dogmatic adherence to laissez-faire capitalism prevented her from doing anything about them.

Dissatisfaction amongst Africans with these conditions as well as with the crisis brought about by World War II made changes imperative. Whereas previously private companies bought up African products for export, this was now taken over by a number of marketing boards. From now on, prices were to be determined by these boards, not by the companies. Though at first glance this may seem like an advance, in fact it was the opposite. These boards used existing channels for the collection and distribution of the products – and that meant foreign companies. The companies lost control over prices, but their monopoly was now more firmly established than ever before and African firms were left out even more. It is of interest to note that the suggestion for these boards originated with the very companies that profited from them.

While in the process of establishing these boards, the government assured the public that they would not be used as instruments of taxation, but that they were to act as “agents and trustees of the producers.” Bauer comments, “Even official statements were very rarely discredited so speedily and completely as these assurances.” They became, in fact, organs for most discriminatory taxes. The boards would pay very low prices to Nigerian producers; they would withhold as much as one-third or one-half of the commercial value. This money would be put in reserve and often used for development that would benefit certain sectional interests and thus represented a heavy tax on the peasantry for the benefit of other groups, including the cities. It was “hardly the way to raise living standards.” (Bauer in Duignan and Gann, IV, 648-652)

**World War II created conditions favourable to economic growth in Nigeria. Asian sources for many products became uncertain and thus West Africa became more strategic. Traditional exports were stepped up, abandoned ones were revived and some new ones were tapped. A wide range of secondary industries was established, not only for purpose of war, but also because Nigerians were beginning to experience shortage of products to which they had become accustomed. Building materials, furniture, leather goods, preserved fruits, meat and dried fish, shingles, butter, potatoes, sugar, cigarettes, soap and beer – these were now all produced in Nigeria.**

**Though the bulk of the profits continued to be exported, Nigerians did profit from this development in the sense that the number of wage and salary earners rose from 183,000 in 1939 to some 300,000 in 1946. Nigerians also made gains in the retail sector, because foreign companies lost much of their foreign supervisory personnel to the armed forces of their home countries. Furthermore, the new developments undermined the traditional channels for supplies. These two factors made it possible for Nigerians trained in the service of foreign firms to organize their own, drawing their supplies from less traditional sources.**

**This rapid expansion made it imperative for the colonial government to further abandon the traditional laissez-faire approach. Since at the home front this change had already taken place, the last barriers to a more dynamic policy were now demolished and the conditions were set for a new era that would end with Nigerian independence in 1960.**

**The Closing Years 1945-1960**

During these final years of formal colonial rule, the government was expected to intervene actively in the economy on behalf of Nigerians. The agency known as Colonial Welfare and Development (CWD) was created during the 1930s, but it was now to become more active in encouraging developments on several fronts. CWD funds were set aside for development projects, and these sums were considerable. However, they constituted a minor share of the available funds. Earlier we discussed the surpluses of the marketing boards that were used partly for development purposes. Another source of funds were the loans colonial governments were allowed to negotiate on their own strength on the London money market. In fact, most funds were derived from local sources.

If other conditions are uncongenial, money is no cure-all. On the one hand, much of the money budgeted for development was never spent because the experts required to guide the various programmes were lacking. On the other hand, a large proportion of the money that was spent was used for an increasing number of expatriate experts. In 1950, the Colonial Office in London enjoyed the services of no fewer than twenty-three advisory bodies, an expensive attempt to involve many citizens in colonial problems – and a good way to ensure that most of the development funds never left the British Isles.

In distinction from earlier periods, the bulk of development funds were used for non-economic purposes. In medical and educational sectors services were greatly increased, including the erection of additional hospitals and post-secondary institutions. The University of Ibadan was born and so was the predecessor of Ahmadu Bello University. Many more students were sent abroad for study. Yet, by 1955 Nigeria was educating a mere 800 graduates and 12,000

secondary school students a year and most of these were in the south, not in the area where the SUM served. (For statistics see Hailey, 1083-1084, 1184-1188)

Other developments included increased miles of roads. Between 1946 and 1958 some 16,000 miles of road were added. Many of these new roads led to areas previously only marginally affected by modern conditions. The comparatively conservative newspaper, *Nigerian Citizen*, expressed gratitude to the government for roads so necessary to move cash crops. An internal airline was developed and genuine improvements of the posts and telecommunication services could be reported. Electricity production increased by nearly 250 percent during the period.

We have already noted the increase in export activities during World War II. This process continued during the post-war years. That Nigerians shared in the benefits of this development is indisputable, but the proportion of those who did was rather minute. The low prices paid by the marketing boards to producers have already been recorded; their profits were either deposited in London banks or used for developments that benefited mostly classes other than that of the producers, even though the latter constituted the bulk of the population by far. It must also be recalled that, though regulated by the marketing boards, the collection and export of these crops were mainly in foreign hands. In 1947, Nigerians were responsible for only five percent of the total exports, a figure that rose to twenty percent by 1963. That increase was due primarily not to government policy or increase in economic wealth on the part of Nigerians, but to changes in economic behavior on the part of foreign firms caused by new circumstances not related to any sense of trusteeship. U.A.C. and John

Holt, for example, facilitated this change simply because they no longer found their heavy reliance on exporting as profitable as before.

It is relevant to summarize industrial development. The period began with the inherited situation of a few European trading monopolies that continued to be carefully and consciously buttressed by a variety of techniques such as “pre-empting the market by handling all ranges of merchandise, by establishing formal cartel arrangements and by undertaking actions (below-cost pricing, credit squeeze) to drive smaller competitors out of business” (Kilby in Duignan and Gann, IV, 491-492). Lack of industrial incentives was also caused by the trading companies’ connections with industrial firms abroad, sometimes including shipping companies that would suffer from the establishment of local industries. The lack of industrial experience on the part of the major companies was an additional factor. Furthermore, the colonial government continued to hold the classic opinion that Africans were served better by keeping them as suppliers of raw materials.

Kilby describes all this under the title “The Influence of Market Structure.” The change of market structure created a new stimulus for manufacturing. An “explosive growth of demand” took place during the 1950s. The value of imports rose steadily from 62 million pounds in 1946 to 114 million in 1954 to 166 million in 1958. This upsurge in the market made it possible to concentrate on a few items and a few locations. As a result, a whole range of newcomers appeared on the scene. Indian organizations arrived. By the late 1950s, Chellaram had become the fifth largest importer. Greek and Levantine companies arrived and Leventis soon ranked third after UAC and John Holt. The situation also encouraged Western manufacturers to bypass

traditional distributors and to create their own distribution channels. These included Philips, National Cash Register, Nestles, and British Paints. Nigerian importers became a third new force, this time encouraged by the traditional distributors for reasons of their own.

The established colonial firms could not cope with this competition, partly because their inherited structures were not suitable to meet the challenge of the more modern methods employed by the new arrivals. The participation of the three leading importers declined from forty-nine percent in 1949 to sixteen percent by 1963.

The response of the older companies was to reorganize and to turn to manufacturing. Their experience of the Nigerian market and the protection afforded by the government to new industries was a great boon to these new endeavours. Kilby traces the efforts of UAC, John Holt and other companies in the manufacturing sector (Duignan and Gann, IV, 496-500). He rejects the common theory that these industrial developments were a response merely to the arrival of the "technological threshold," for some projects were embarked upon before the threshold had been reached.

The government did not stand by idly as the process unfolded. It resorted to a variety of tactics to encourage it, such as technical education, research and loans. In addition, it legislated fiscal incentives that now applied generally instead of being granted only after individual negotiations; "accelerated depreciation (1943), pioneer income tax holiday (1952), import duty relief (1956)." The government also aided various foreign enterprises by providing capital and by accepting larger proportions of the risks. Here the

textile and cement industries benefited especially (Duignan and Gann, IV, 492-503).

Kilby does not neglect to relate the experience of Nigerian ventures in the modern economy of the period. The government provided financial aid to various indigenous entrepreneurs, but a considerable proportion of them ultimately failed, while most of the others failed to exploit the full potential of the situation. Kilby's explanation for this phenomenon is two-fold: (1) cultural factors of social-psychological nature were not sufficiently oriented to the type of efficiency required in such sizable concerns; (2) there was definitely limited access to technology (Duignan and Gann, IV, 506-517).

Thus one finds Nigeria facing independence with her economy firmly in the grips of foreigners. The last issue of the newspaper *West African Pilot* prior to independence, contains a report of a Nigerian businessman complaining that foreigners control the entire economy and that locals lack the means of effective competition. The independence issue of the same paper affirm that foreigners controlled the Nigerian economy in minute details: banking, the insurance industry, the building and repairing of roads, the supply and service of vehicles. The latter were continuing the colonial tradition of exporting raw materials and returning them as manufactured goods (30 Sept/60; 1 Oct/60).

### **The Essence of Colonialism**

We have reached the stage where we must ask what colonialism really is. Without denying the fact that colonial motives cannot be

reduced to one category, we assert that the *basic* and *primary* force behind it was economic in nature. The history summarized in this chapter makes this unmistakably clear. The primary reason Britain established colonial rule in northern Nigeria was the protection of her economic interests. The political was subservient to the economic. We have also seen that throughout the period, arrangements were constantly made to favour British interests and that at the end of the period British and other foreign firms were firmly in control of the Nigerian economy. The political task, namely to make Nigeria safe for British economic interest, had been successfully carried out and the colonial political structure could therefore safely be dismantled. When independence was granted in 1960, it could hardly be foreseen that oil would within a few years give Nigeria sufficient clout to challenge the inherited economic situation.

The economic motive is well expressed in Hendrik Kraemer's description of colonialism. Kraemer was a Dutch missionary strategist who was deeply influential in liberating the International Missionary Council (IMC) from the clutches of the Social Gospel. He wrote,

A country is a "colonial" country where the real dynamic economic activity is in *foreign* hands, nourished by *foreign* capital, directed by a *foreign* spirit of enterprise, primarily directed towards *foreign* interests. A "colonial" country is therefore a country which lives ... in a state of helotism; a country of which people and land are, in the last instance, instruments and means for *foreign* purposes, and where *foreign* decisions determine these peoples' destiny (Kraemer, 65).

Kraemer realized that his description does not cover all aspects of colonialism, but he insisted throughout the decades that it expresses the central core of this movement. Kraemer was also of the opinion that a country can be a colony without the formal political trappings and cited Latin America as example. For the purposes of this book, we will use “colonialism” to describe situations that include the formal political structures, while we will employ the term “neo-colonialism” to cover situations where the political structures are apparently in the control of the local people, but the economic sphere is largely controlled from abroad. In this chapter we have traced Nigeria’s journey from the pre-colonial state through that of colonialism to that of neo-colonialism.

### Postscript

This chapter has been concerned to describe the economic context in which the SUM carried out its mandate. It is consciously one-sided. We have singled out the essence of colonialism. To give a full description of colonialism would carry us far beyond our purposes. However, by now the reader has a lot of unanswered questions in his mind and may possibly even be slightly annoyed and suspicious. Is that all there is to be said for colonialism – nothing positive? Has it been purely a record of sin?

It must be remembered that this book is a summary of a voluminous study and a summary can hardly do justice to all the aspects. Chapter nine of the larger study deals with the questions most readers have in their minds by now. It describes the legacy of the widening gap between the rich and poor nations, a gap that is said to be drawing

the world to a crisis. Not only is this gap described vividly, but its relevance to missions is not ignored. The neo-colonial aftermath is described on a global scale as well as special reference to Nigeria. Other aspects of the colonial legacy are described, such as unbalanced development, the creation of national dependence on a single product (monocultures), the suppression of budding industries and failure to develop new ones, and the isolation of African countries from each other in favour of economic links with the colonizer (balkanization). The role of multinationals is also scrutinized.

The question is also raised as to non-economic motives. It is pointed out in the larger study that these motives were many. There were cultural motives, as well as nationalistic, religious and ideological ones. There was, on the part of some, a passion for adventure. There was, it must be emphasized, a great deal of humanitarianism, however much it may have been derailed by ideology. Basic to it all is a kind of mystery that in the final analysis eludes satisfactory empirical explanation. But, we do not tire to insist, the basic motivation that set the wheels in motion and kept it going was economic, however multifarious may have been the motives of the innumerable individual participants. The economic motive provided the framework in which all others expressed themselves, even if they were not always aware of the central motive.

Neither is it suggested that colonialism is the sole or even major cause for so-called underdevelopment. Development and underdevelopment, it is explained, both have their social, physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects; it is not merely a matter of economics. There are a number of internal causes that militated against development as much, if not more, than did colonialism.

**Especially the *basic religious orientation* of a culture can obstruct the type of development that is so much in international discussion.**

**There is the question whether colonialism had only negative effects. The problems inherent in answering this question are pointed out. Nevertheless, it is concluded that it did have a number of positive results, but these results were secondary to the primary motive, even though inevitable.**

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**Note: This chapter is based on pages 45-67, 220-229, 325-33, 411-436 of *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context*. Those wishing more details of fact or bibliography are referred to those pages.**

## Chapter 2

### The Sudan United Mission: Background and Beginning

The SUM did not simply fall out of the clear blue sky. It was a direct product of the British Evangelical community of the nineteenth century. It will be useful, therefore, to take a brief look at this community, particularly at its socio-economic views .

The nineteenth century in Great Britain can be described in many different ways. For our purposes it is sufficient to highlight three dominant characteristics that go far in describing the society as a whole not only, but also the Evangelical community. The first of these is often referred to as the Industrial Revolution. Science and technology made sudden tremendous advances that were immediately utilized in an unprecedented development of industries. Factories sprang up in many major cities and lured many rural people, for reasons we will not describe here, who were forced off the land of their ancestors. Communication technology was rapidly developing. Railways, steamships, the postal system and telegraph – all these replaced slower means of communication and transport within Great Britain not only, but also in the world beyond. British external trade expanded to such an extent that in 1870 her volume “exceeded that of France, Germany and Italy together and was between three and four times that of the United States” (Trevelyan, 531-534). Evangelicals were active participants in these developments. It was a most exciting period – for some.

The second characteristic was an evolutionary optimism. As a result of the exciting developments just described, there was an unbounding optimism, especially amongst the middle class. There was confidence that history was pushing civilization relentlessly to higher planes. Though Evangelicals violently rejected Darwin's theories with respect to origins, being largely ignorant of the philosophical tradition underlying it, they did espouse a kind of social Darwinism without realizing the affinity between the two. By the time the SUM appeared on the scene, the evolutionary view was in its heyday among Evangelicals.

Thirdly, Evangelicals shared with many of their contemporaries their adherence to laissez-faire capitalism. Since history, including economic history, is progressive by nature, any obstructions placed in the way of "natural" economic developments, whether by individuals or governments, would be detrimental to all. They were not altogether blind to some negative consequences of economic developments, but they had a firm belief, inherited from Adam Smith, that there was the invisible hand of God that would overrule such negative effects. Thus they preferred to let the economy develop without hindrance and expected the final outcome to be a harmonious equilibrium that would benefit all parties involved. In the meantime, the pronouncements of Adam Smith were basically followed. Said Smith, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Let each person do his individualistic best, or each firm, and seek his own individualistic profit. Unrestricted competition was the key to success, while any type of interference constituted transgression of divine law.

Though Evangelicals belonged primarily to the middle class that did indeed benefit from such arrangements and that therefore had no great difficulty in recognizing the benevolent hand of God, the same could hardly be said of the workers. They, too, had to compete with each other for jobs in a restricted market. Employers were in a position to exploit the competition for jobs by paying extremely low wages and by doing little or nothing to improve working conditions to make them fit for humans. Low wages, long working schedules, child labour – all these were the order of the day (Marshall, 26-28). The *Ulverston Mirror*, a Lancashire newspaper, reported in 1869

Many of the men have to walk four miles to their homes drenched in wet clothes, and when they arrive there is only a six-inch fire grate for drying, cooking and doing all the work.... The poor children have to stand behind the smoking garments half-starved and after all our drying, the clothes are scarcely fit to put on at such an early hour as half-past two in the morning.

Between the worker on the one hand and the managers and owners (shareholders) on the other no relationship existed except those of bare economics. Especially the shareholders had no idea how they got their profits and most of them did not consider it their responsibility to know.

Under such conditions the development of slums with all their attendant evils was inescapable. There was lack of sewers and refuse removal, bad ventilation, bare walls and unpaved streets. Till the 1870s, little

was done to control the slum lords ... who, according to the prevalent laissez-faire philosophy, were engaged from motives

of self-interest in forwarding the general happiness. These pioneers of “progress” saved space by crowding families into single rooms or thrusting them underground into cellars, and saved money by the use of cheap and insufficient building materials, and by providing no drains – or, worse still by providing drains that oozed into the water-supply. In London Lord Shaftesbury discovered a room with a family in each of its four corners, and a room with a cesspool immediately below its boarded floor (Trevelyan, 528-529, 541).

Builders and landlords enjoyed the freedom “to lay out modern England as best suited their own private gain, too often without a thought given to amenity or to the public welfare” (Trevelyan, 579).

Alcoholism, of course, was rife and life expectancy, in an age of medical advance, was reduced. An 1842 report on sanitary conditions in Manchester, the industrial city which was served by Liverpool as its seaport, showed the average lifespan for professionals to be 38 years, for tradesmen and their families 20, while for mechanics, labourers and their families it was a mere 17!

Evangelicals, the heirs of the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, did not generally suffer from these problems. By the middle of the nineteenth century they had enjoyed upward economic and social mobility and had become part of the class that owned and managed the firms who created these conditions. Their upward mobility had been greatly aided by the values that came out of these revivals: thrifty, sober, persevering, puritanic, enterprising, respectable, but intolerant of failure. Evangelicals had been able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps since the beginning of the

century and tended to have contempt for the failure of workers to do likewise. Since they had been able to work themselves up, they assumed that failure on the part of the workers was due basically to their immorality, not to factors related to working or living conditions. Alcoholism and other ills associated with slums were reduced to moral problems, to immorality on the part of workers, not of the middle class who created the conditions.

We are not suggesting that Evangelicals were blind to suffering or indifferent. However, their moralistic understanding of the problems determined their approach to finding solutions. The range of programmes and activities they engaged in to relieve all this suffering was most impressive, but little or none of it was aimed at the basic economic and political causes. They attempted to reach workers by organizing mission halls that featured programmes supposedly more suitable for workers' tastes. Churches embarked on a programme to train laypeople of working class origin for evangelistic and pastoral work among their own kind. William Booth founded the Salvation Army at this time partially because he felt that the poor can only be reached by their own kind. "Settlements" were established in workers' districts. Their members of the middle class, often academics, would live and work in the surrounding community to create harmony between the classes, sometimes for purposes of conversion and sometimes for purely social reasons.

Indeed, the century witnessed an energetic outburst of Christian social activities aimed at the amelioration of many social problems. The most famous example, is, of course, the Christian opposition to the Atlantic slave trade. There were literally scores of social projects upon which Evangelicals embarked. There were schools, including

some for the poor, help for vagrants, associations for the health and comfort of workers, soup kitchens for the destitute, factory reforms, libraries, mechanics institutes, saving banks, infirmaries, literary and philosophical societies, town projects known as “bettering societies.” Christian organizations and efforts continued to proliferate as the century drew to a close, organizations with every conceivable interest. Philanthropy and humanitarianism were among the predominant characteristics of Evangelicals.

The problem of alcoholism received special attention. It met with a resounding battle cry of temperance, abstinence and signing of pledges. The Blue Ribbon Army was formed for those who publicly advertised their pledge of abstinence by means of a blue ribbon on their chest. It even became a matter of generation gap. The older generation favoured temperance, while the younger insisted on abstention, each accusing the other of being either “over-righteous” or “polluted with the accursed thing.”

Sometimes the workers would appeal to the church to help them, but the help they sought and the help the church was prepared to give often did not coincide. In 1839, workers in industrial Sheffield engaged in public demonstrations in support of universal suffrage. At that time they still cared enough for the church to request the local Anglican vicar to preach on James 5:1-6, a passage strongly condemnatory of the wealthy. Instead, an unknown assistant preached from Proverbs 24, a warning not to meddle with them that are given to change. Workers were pointed “to the serious and diligent pursuit of these better things which the Gospel of Christ held out for them.” Upon insistence of the workers, the next Sunday the James passage was the text, but the following verses, exhorting to

patience and endurance, were added. "Their troubles were sent by God and they must be ready to bear them. If they were poor, they must be contented, for if they had the riches of others their responsibility would be greater..." (Wickham, 99-100). Similarly, when the unemployed marched upon a church in a London suburb, "they were treated to a sermon on 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers'" (McLeod, 179-180). Evangelicals were very influential in all churches by this time. They were clearly interested in improving the situation, but on their own terms.

Having indicated the social concerns of Evangelicals, we must now look at the place of social concern in their scheme of things. The basic point to be made here is that social work had no independent justification of its own. Social involvement was generally seen in a role subordinate to evangelism. If it did not serve evangelism, that is, if it did not produce converts, it had lost its Christian rationale for many. A rather crude example is that of the head of a Wesleyan mission in Liverpool who is reported to have said that he helped no one until he was assured of the sincerity of the religious intentions of the potential recipients of aid. When Booth founded the Salvation Army, he was much more concerned with saving the souls of the poor than with their economic plight. However, he began to realize that the terrible conditions of the workers were an impediment to their listening to the Gospel. It was then that he turned to deeper social involvement. It was not a change of theology so much as a change of evangelistic strategy. It did not last. His assistants opposed his new social emphasis and he himself soon lost interest in it. His Evangelical interests were too deep to be thus suppressed, especially when it became clear that his social approach did not yield the expected

dividends. Evangelical social efforts were generally not aimed at introducing basic changes in society structures so much as at getting converts who would tow the established socio-economic line of the day.

The Evangelical attitude towards social problems did not go unchallenged. Their most famous critic was Frederick D. Maurice. His criticism was deep-going and harsh, but he made little impact, partially because he rejected a number of theological doctrines held dear by Evangelicals. Though the phrase “religion is opium” is generally associated with Karl Marx, it was actually coined by an Anglican clergyman, Charles Kingsley, an associate of Maurice. He charged that Christians “have used the Bible as if it were a mere special constable’s handbook, an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they are being overloaded” (Norman, 3-4). Thomas Arnold professed not to understand the usefulness of a church that does not attempt to

Christianize the nation, and introduce the principle of Christianity into men’s social and civil relations, and expose the wickedness of that spirit which maintains the game laws and in in agriculture and trade seems to think there is no such sin as covetousness, and that if a man is not dishonest, he has nothing to do but make all the profit of his capital he can (Wickham, 86; Trevelyan, 517).

Another contemporary, Edward Miall, rejected the idea that “evangelistic techniques, buildings, missions and tracts can change the situation.” He castigated the church for her “unregenerate value attached to ‘respectability,’” for the “trade spirit of the times” that

had invaded the church. An urgent need, he insisted, was “that opinions on trade and politics are scrupulously tested by religion” (Wickham, 119).

The basic criticism of the Evangelical social stance was that it was based on a form of dualism, a “gulf between spirit and matter.” A report submitted to an assembly of the Congregational Union in 1890 contained the following charge that, though deleted by the assembly, is representative of contemporary criticism of Evangelicalism:

It was the defect of the honoured leaders of the Evangelical revival, as it has remained the defect of the great movement, that it disparaged and belittled the life on earth, except so far as it was a preparation for the life above .... It was not sufficiently considered that the life which Christ gives ... is to rule and transform every relation in which its possessor stands to his fellow man (Inglis, 306).

We agree with that observation. However, it must be understood as describing the *theological* attitude of Evangelicals. In their own *economic* life they tended to embrace the world wholeheartedly, though with a pinch of moralistic salt.

While the SUM was still in its infancy, a theological giant appeared, P.T. Forsyth. He was much concerned with a Christian approach to the social problem. An effective church, he wrote, requires more than mere piety. There is need for Christian experts in economic affairs. The Christian philanthropic record has been a splendid one, but it ignores the basic problem. The church needs professionals “able to probe the root-cause in the sickness of our modern society – men who know the economic situation ... and can produce practical policies for

redeeming society.” Love and faith will not suffice to keep a man aright, for

They will not give individual men moral insight on the scale of whole civilization. They will enable a man to make the Christian best of the current system individually, but ... simple personal faith will not of itself give the power and the insight to apply the Christian moral principle to the accepted standard of the age.

In 1916, he chided the church as follows:

... the Kingdom of God is treated as an interest which does not concern nations, but only missions and philanthropics. Policy may remain pagan if religion stands by with ambulance, sedatives, opiates. The Cross has for the heart a securing and consoling power, but it is not in the same position for active life. It belongs to personal religion only, and chiefly to what might be called the night side of that. It has the vespertudinal note. It is not for political or business affairs. It has not the dimension of history... (Hunter, 22-23, 97-98; Wickham, 201-202, 207).

The special problems about which we write had towards the end of the century spilled over to the Continent and had taken on alarming proportions there as well so that alert Christian leaders were moved to address themselves to it. In an address to a Christian social congress held in 1891, the Dutch theologian-politician Abraham Kuyper said that even though “men did not literally eat each other like the cannibals, ... the more powerful exploited the weaker by means of a weapon against which there was no defence....” Workers were simply “forced to accept any condition, no matter how unjust ...” The mercantile gospel of laissez-faire was responsible for the fact

that “the law of the animal world, dog eat dog, became the basic law for every social relationship”(Kuyper, 22, 35, 16). Simultaneously, Pope Leo XIII wrote:

The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes, popular meetings, legislatures, and rulers of nations are all busied with it – and actually there is no question which has taken a deeper hold on the public mind (Wynne, 208).

Clearly, by the time the SUM appeared in 1904, there was already a long tradition of Christian criticism with respect to capitalism and Evangelical participation in it. One does not have to turn to Marxists for hard-biting critique. Whether or not this had any impact on the SUM remains to be seen. It was, it is good to remember, *this* laissez-faire economic order that required colonialism, according to imperial architects.

Having described the socio-economic thinking of the community that spawned the SUM, we now return to the mission herself.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Evangelical interest in Africa mounted steadily. At mid-century, Livingstone had done much to draw attention to the needs of the “Dark Continent.” He had advocated the undermining of the interior slave trade by replacing it with “legitimate trade,” a term that referred to trade between Africa and the West very much in Lugardian terms. Livingstone had high expectations of mutual benefit from free trade in typical laissez-faire fashion. His call for Evangelical missions to join the effort kept ringing in their ears for the rest of the century.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century a number of attempts were made to penetrate into the Sudan, then a term reserved for the broad belt of Black Africa south of the Sahara from east to west. The American Southern Baptists, the Canadian Bingham – founder of the Sudan Interior Mission -, the Anglican Church Missionary Society and others attempted a breakthrough into the Muslim interior of what is now the far north of Nigeria. The SUM was the last to appear on the scene in that series.

For some years, Grattan Guinness, a leader among British Evangelicals, had edited a small magazine designed to evoke interest in a mission to the Sudan. The idea was to halt the march of Islam among the Pagan tribes by beating the former to the draw. Colonial powers were putting a stop to slave raiding. As a result, Muslims were no longer seen as a threat. Once they were stripped of their threat, their wide religious and economic contacts as well as their superior education now gave them a respectability that made their religion an attractive alternative. Added to this was the fact that colonial regimes favoured them, respected them and drew from them whatever clerks and administrators they needed. Guinness and others alarmed Evangelicals to the fact that Africa was in imminent danger of becoming a Muslim continent.

The German Dr. H. Karl W. Kumm met the Guinness family in Egypt. Before long he married their sprightly daughter, Lucy. After some efforts to interest German Christians in the challenge of the Sudan, he joined his father-in-law in Britain in the latter's attempts to interest existing mission bodies in the same challenge. However, though these organizations were sympathetic to the need, none had the resources for expansion at the time. Before long, the SUM was established for

**this very purpose, not because of any doctrinal disagreements with existing Evangelical bodies, but simply because no one was prepared to face the task. In 1904, the mission sent its first party of four men to Northern Nigeria. Three were to remain in the country, while Kumm, their leader, was to return to home base soon. Upon the advice of Lugard, the party settled at Wase in Bauchi Province. The basic purpose of the mission was to counteract the Muslim advance by missionary work among the Pagans.**

**The SUM soon realized the enormity of the task. Kumm was sent recruiting to various countries – Canada, the United States, Denmark, Switzerland, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Since he cut a very impressive figure and was a most persuasive speaker, he succeeded in interesting many people in the task. In each of these countries branches of the SUM were established, each with their own independent work in the Sudan, most of them in Nigeria. Some of these branches are non-denominational, like the British branch, the focus of our attention, while others are denominational, like that of the Christian Reformed Church and the Danish Lutherans. Strong churches have emerged from some of these branches, so that during the last half of the 1970s several branches have merged with the churches they helped create and thus ceased to exist as independent missions. The British branch is one of them. Its personnel are now serving under the Church of Christ in Nigeria. From this point on, when we refer to the SUM, unless otherwise indicated, we refer exclusively to the British branch.**

**We are now ready to enquire into the relationship of the SUM to the colonial regime in Northern Nigeria and their evaluation of it.**

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**Note: This chapter is based on Chapter 1 and pp. 111-124 of *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context*.**

## Chapter 3

### Positive Evaluation of Colonialism

When we isolate the colonial aspect of the SUM's life, we are emphasizing an aspect that, at least after the initial period, was not central to her *own* thinking and work. It was a side issue. Thus, the reader must be careful not to judge the mission as a whole while reading the next few chapters. If we were to discuss the mission's *central* concerns and how she worked them out, the story would be quite different.

Secondly, it must be understood that we are not primarily interested in the SUM as such, but only in so far as she illustrates what traditional Evangelicalism leads to in socio-economic affairs. In our second chapter we have emphasized that this mission was a direct product of the Evangelical community. Missionaries can never be held solely responsible for their visions and strategies, for they are always members of a home constituency that has shaped them, and whose ideals they have been instructed to carry out. We are focusing on a particular mission because such a singular focus will help make the issues concrete and avoid hazy generalizations, but basically we are writing about the Evangelical community as a whole.

Finally, throughout the reading of this chapter, it is to be remembered that we are writing about a very different age, even if only a few decades ago. Though it may be difficult for us in the 1980s to see how

colonialism could be regarded as a liberation movement, we insist that in order to understand the following materials properly, it be remembered that the SUM's deepest goal was the total liberation of Africa. Though they wholeheartedly cooperated in the colonial endeavour, this was not because they had any interest in oppression or exploitation. Having profited greatly from the products of laissez-faire philosophy at home, they naturally expected great things from its colonial expansion abroad. In keeping with Evangelicals as a whole, the mission judged colonialism as a prime tool for African liberation from all that was evil and dark – social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual. It was a goal from which they never swerved and which they actively realized as a mission when they allowed themselves to be absorbed into the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). That was, as Mr. Dearsley, their present General Secretary, pointed out recently, a most uncolonial act. That act, it should be added, was not a last desperate attempt to prolong the mission's stay in Nigeria, but it was an expression of a goal consistently held from the very beginning.

For the rest of this chapter we will present a number of themes commonly found throughout the literature that arose out of the SUM community and that relate to their positive affirmation of colonialism. We will see how the missionaries first regarded Africa and colonialism as well as trace the development of their ideas up to independence in 1960.

### *Total Depravity*

In his attempt to interest Western Christians in the missionary needs of the Sudan, in common with his contemporary colleagues, Kumm

dwelt a great deal on the negative aspects of African society. "Darkness" was the key concept used to describe the essence of Africa. The term is embedded in the subtitle of his book, *The Sudan: A Short Compendium of Facts and Figures about the Land of Darkness*. In this book he wrote that "there is a land in this wonderful world, called 'The Land of Darkness;' ... dark are the bodies of the people who live there, darker are their minds, and darker still their soul, - the great Land of Darkness" (p. 15). That Kumm was serious about this evaluation is borne out by his repetition of such sentiments elsewhere. "Dark as their bodies are their minds, and darker still the souls of the sons and daughters of the Dark Continent" (*Khont*, 156). In a promotion pamphlet the public is informed about the "heritage of a host of heathen nations" that have been left "all these ages to the reign of unmixed darkness and unmitigated depravity." Africans are ignorant; they wander in moral twilight; they "know not what they do." Africa is the "darkest region of the earth" where one encounters the lowest of the low. Certain southern tribes were described as living in "unspeakable degradation," which he illustrated with examples credible enough. One is tempted to quote him at length in order to relay adequately the vehemence of these descriptions and his obvious relish in painting such dark scenes. He depicted the burial customs of a certain tribe that staked live men and women to the ground when the chief died. But even worse was the

rampant immorality of these people. One cannot go into details, and the curtain of reticence must be closely drawn over the most loathsome sin. I can only say that they were absolutely without the faintest regard for the Seventh Commandment,

except in so far as they can use the marriage bond for pecuniary purposes.

He pictured the king of the Gazum people sitting in front of him on the ground, the ruler of a people accustomed to eating their elderly folk. They were, he submitted, “the very lowest of the low, the most degraded of humanity” (*Sudan*, 79-80, 208; Boer, 125).

In fairness to Kumm, this was not all he said about Africans. He developed real affection for them and even a kind of respect. He had much positive to say about them, but that is not related to his affirmation of colonialism and including it therefore would divert us from our purpose.

Kumm regarded Livingstone as his greatest hero and was deeply influenced by the latter, especially by his views on the interior Muslim slave trade. Kumm was forever groping for the proper vocabulary combinations to pile up image after image to give the Western Evangelical a clear picture of the horrors of this trade. There was the curse of Ham that had been Africa’s “woe, and for centuries and millenniums it has been in the grip of demons. Chains have bound it, chains of superstition and idolatry, chains of mental ignorance and physical slavery....” He wrote of emirs sending slave raiders into their territories in order to collect the annual tribute due to them and in the process destroying, killing, enslaving, utterly devastating large areas. “I have known close on five thousand square miles of territory absolutely depopulated by the ruling emir.” He had personally seen “huge walled towns deserted, thousands of acres of farm land relapsing into jungle and an entire population absorbed. And this sort of thing is not done once or twice in a century, but it is absolutely

being done somewhere or other every day.” With prolonged experience the cruel and ingenious methods of torture became increasingly refined: “The refinements of torture that suggest themselves to the lustful mind of the Sudanese Mohammedan are many and peculiar.”

The impact on individual people was as devastating on the people as it was on the land and society in general. The following quotation vividly depicts the unutterable misery experienced by the hapless victims of this devilish trade:

Real misery is seen written on the faces of those whose families have been destroyed or torn from them. There is the mother who has lost her children; the lover who has seen his sweetheart torn from his arms; the chief who has lost his authority; the slaves on whom privation and disease have set their mark; the woman with sunken eyes, gaping rib spaces, and long skinny breasts and the man with tumid spear-thrust or raw, oozing sword-slash fresh upon him. Behind the shed is the body of a slave who has just drawn his last breath, his thin limbs tangled in the agony of death (*Sudan*, 124).

Here we have landed in what Livingstone referred to as “hell,” the place where “Satan has his seat.”

The side-effects of this terrorism as Kumm described them were astounding. During his trans-Africa safari in 1909, Kumm came across the Sara-Kabba people, who had their women stretch their lower lip to incredible ugliness, not because the men folk thought this beautiful, but, on the contrary, supposedly to make them unattractive to Muslim slavers. After centuries of harassment, these people had

withdrawn themselves into swamps. As soon as a stranger came in sight, in this case Kumm himself, he “heard shrieks, a rush, a rustling in the grass, and there was silence; the population of the village had decamped” (*Hausaland*, 155-156).

It was this Muslim terrorism that constituted Kumm’s main reason for advocating European intervention. In the course of describing two Arab slave routes, he advised the British and the French to cooperate in closing the one. With the arrival of the European, the spell cast over the continent by demons, ignorance and slavery was broken, “and in our days the giant is lifting himself from the ground, and in his half-sleep is looking around questioningly.” “Africa is today standing before the crossways, with a bent to follow the white man’s path, if only the guides can be secured for him.” The “evil dreams” that have “made Africa’s sleep unhappy and restless” have come to their end. Though with some hesitation, the doctor supported Martin Luther’s evaluation of Mohammed as “the first-born of Satan,” because of Islam’s “avowed acceptance, practice, and teaching of slavery.” It becomes for this reason “one of the most wicked, if not *the* most wicked religion....” Kumm simply did not tire of describing the worst and most flagrant degradations he had witnessed in Africa.

Muslims were worse than Pagans in Kumm’s mind. The darkness described earlier was largely caused by the Muslim slavers; Pagans were mostly innocent victims. The Muslims were the perpetrators of Africa’s greatest evil, the agents of demonizing Africa. Though he attributed a higher degree of civilization to Muslims, he also regarded them as excelling in works of evil. Whereas Pagans were often portrayed as open to the influence of the West, Islam was depicted as opposed to all progress, as the greatest “promoter of barbarism in

Africa,” the “greatest enemy to European culture in Africa,” the “most serious danger for the future development of the continent.” Religious intolerance, brutality, fanaticism, unbridled covetousness, lying and deception were all characteristics of Muslims. “Wherever Mohammedanism has gone, lying and stealing and sexual diseases have spread, until certain pagan places which were clean fifteen years ago, have become syphilitic cesspools.” To Kumm, Islam “was ALL BAD” indeed (*Khont*, 228-229; Cleverdon, 161; Boer, 127-128).

Kumm may have been more persistent in his description of Dark Africa, but he was by no means the only artist in the field. Articles and other documents written by SUM missionaries reflect much of the same attitude. The inhabitants of the Kabwir-Panyam area were described as “wild, naked savages,” “given over to cannibal-ism.” They were without God or hope – and that village after village, a condition described with alliterative relish as a “state of sin stained darkened souls.” “The host of heathen nations” of the Sudan were regarded as for ages existing in a “reign of unmixed darkness and unmitigated depravity.” They wander about “on moral midnight; they know not what they do.” One missionary described a religious occasion in Donga, a town allegedly “very sunken in sin and degradation.” Women were engaged in a dance, “an awful sight,” their facial expressions were “terrible,” and they appeared “demon-possessed.” A late-night dance was accompanied with “all kinds of vicious practices.”

The depravity and moral degradation described was considered largely the result of the slave trade that had reduced the nations of West Africa into “fragments of nations,” “disintegrated nations,” “broken nations” that “are the spent waves of a stream of harassed

humanity testifying to terrific tempests of strife that for ages have swept over the seething millions of the vast interior,” explained Palmer. The “calamity of slavery” has left “the crushed mass a mere heap of ... particles.” Though potentially the Negro is no degenerate creature, division and oppression of the weak, enforced by “superstition, sorcery and cruel practices of dark abomination too hideous to be detailed” were held responsible for this humiliating degeneration. To be sure, external parties enslaved them, but this would not have been necessary if “Africa’s children” had not been so prone to “a tendency to quarrel amongst themselves. Esau despised his own birthright and sold it to his brother. The Negro’s sin is worse; he despised his brother’s birthright and sold it to anyone who cared to buy it.” It was supposed to have been this tendency to so misuse his brother that invested the history of West Africa with “any interest or value” at all during the last few centuries, for “apart from that, the people would appear to have been nothing more than the passive objects of other folk’s energies.” Their history lay mainly before them in the future “and the significance of the past few centuries of the influence of European rule upon the West Coast people in the preparation for that future.”

As with Kumm so with his colleagues did Islam have to bear the brunt of missionary castigation. Under the power of Muslim emirs, northern Nigeria was regarded as having a history that was mainly a record of slave raids and other cruelties. Barbarism reigned supreme. Amongst Muslims, it was asserted, there is no necessary connection between religion and morality. “‘Might is right’ has been the maxim of Islam from its earliest days ....” This alleged divorce between religion and morals in Islam was a frequently-stressed theme. The same writer

reported the case of a very religious *alhaji* in Turkey, who was said to have repeated the ninety-nine names of God more than any other man. However, he became a robber, was brought to court, but instead of being sentenced, the judge kissed his “holy” hand. Islam is different from all other non-Christian religions in that it is “essentially the spirit of Anti-Christ.” The heathen is ignorant of Christ, but the Muslim rejects him. Islam leaves a man “sunk in sin” and “panders to all that is lowest in human nature.” In countries where Islam has reigned supreme, the record showed mainly destitution, low morality, “insecurity of life, bribery, and corruption, degradation of womanhood, persecution and cruelty.” The many evils found in Christian lands, including slavery, were performed in spite of Christianity, but in Muslim countries, evil was the direct result of that religion. The editor of *The Lightbearer*, the magazine of the SUM, quoted from the journals of the explorer Henry Barth, who traveled from Tripoli through the Sahara Desert to Kano in 1850, a scene depicting the atrocities of the slave trade in language reminiscent of Kumm:

There a large shed, like a hurdle, full of half-naked half-starved slaves torn from their native homes, from their wives or husbands, from their children or parents, arranged in rows like cattle, and staring desperately upon the buyers anxiously watching into whose hands it should be their destiny to fall.

Paganism, asserted Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary Walter Miller, does not debase as much as does Islam – an insult sharper than which is hardly possible to a Muslim. Prior to the British take-over of some of the Muslim realms in Africa, “the pastime, the

exhilaration, and the joy of life ... was the annual raid into native pagan territory to catch slaves” (Boer, 169-171)!

All these terrible descriptions were the products of a shocked people not only, but also represented attempts to awaken the British Evangelicals to the desperate religious need of Africa. These descriptions were never disowned by the mission, but as the years wore on and missionaries had a chance to observe Africa more closely, such descriptions slowly disappeared from the literature, though never completely. In 1928, Wingate, addressing the annual meeting of the SUM, still spoke in similar terms and asserted that the “menace of Islam” was by no means over, since there was evidence that their slave raiding was still going on. In 1939, Dawson once again referred to the theme of “dark Africa” with all of its satanic aspects. During the 1940s, Farrant, for many years the mission’s secretary in Nigeria, still classified Africa in general as dark and desolate. However, these states of affairs continued to be referred to in a specific context, namely, whenever colonialism was called into question and needed defending.

This theme remained the basic reason the SUM supported colonialism. They saw colonialism as the only way in which Africa could be freed from such terrible burdens, colonialism as the extension of domestic laissez-faire capitalism.

### *Europe: the Land of Liberty and Justice*

The SUM was a product of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. She shared with that community their awe for the achievements of the

century and their pride in Western civilization. If Africa was totally dark, the West was almost wholly light and therefore well equipped to lead Africa out of her darkness. Kumm, speaking of the three main Protestant nations, America, Germany and Great Britain, and their power in the world, insisted that they “became what they were through the Bible and Christian influence,” an assertion of which he never tired. The British empire was built on the Bible and Christian faith. Constructions such as “Christian government,” “Christian Europe,” “Christian nations,” true to the spirit of his day, are everywhere interspersed in his writing (*Khont*, 7, 230, 109, 121, 209). Northern Nigeria needed an education based on “Christian European principles” (*Sudan*, 105). There was the need to “uphold the integrity and humanity of ideals of which the Christian civilized nations of Europe are so justly proud” (*Hausaland*, 65). He described the British empire as “an empire utterly different from the previous,” for it was characterized by “red chains of brotherly love” and “freedom and justice will prove themselves stronger than steel or gold.” He attributed the highest virtues to the West, especially liberty and justice. Within the West, Britain was the purest example of it all: she outshone all other nations in that “justice, truthfulness, honesty and liberty are valued more highly in Britain than in any other state on earth ...” (*Khont*, 15). And all that from a native German!

Kumm was well in tune with his British staff. In the course of recommending a memorial to Livingstone on the centenary of his birth, the constituency was reminded that they were “richly endowed ... with the blessings of a true gospel and of the highest civilisation....” The blessings of Western culture were thought to include superiority in the intellectual, moral, commercial and political aspects of that

culture (Boer, 168). The superiority of the West was not her own accomplishment, but it was due to the influence of the Gospel. There was no cause for pride, for the Gospel and its accomplishments were a gift. Many years ago in Europe there was also a race without a history that became “the material out of which Christianity formed the world empires of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon race.” They became great *after* and *because* they became Christian. The *Bible* made them what they are (*Khont*, 8). In a similar vein, Rooker wrote,

There was once a General, belonging to the greatest Empire of the day, who 1900 years ago visited a certain island. He found only naked savages. His visit resulted in the permanent occupation of the island. But it had no promise of any great future. Then some Christian missionaries came and taught the Christian religion, and the island became devoted to the Christian faith. It took time, but the end was that island became a greater Empire than Rome, and those savages were your forefathers, sir. What Christianity did for Britain it can do for the Sudan. Therefore I believe in Foreign Missions (Boer, 168).

More than a decade later, Farrant, not normally given to extravagances, described the West in terms sufficiently remarkable to reproduce:

To the great ideas which surge round the world today ..., the East has contributed little. The West certainly was responsible for the great war, but even that was waged in blood for a principle and there has followed from it a crop of the boldest and finest ideas the world has ever known which are finding fruit in achievement. None of them come from the East. Turkey,

Egypt, China and India are too busy copying our ideas of yesterday. The West has just come through a period of self-abasement, when it admired everything but itself (even that was creditable) and is emerging on to heights in which it again finds faith in these things which are its strength (Boer, 229).

As the vivid description of African darkness gradually diminished, so did this rather uncritical and ideological exaltation of European virtues, though it never died altogether. After World War II, the mission began to realize that the West was no longer true to her heritage. There was now talk of “neo-paganism” in the West. The time had come where the West could learn a few things from Asia and, yes, from Africa (Boer, 384)! However, this new attitude was no denial of the former emphasis. It was merely a recognition that the old virtuous Europe was not like she used to be.

### *Paternalism*

The relationship between Europe and Africa was seen by the SUM in strongly paternalistic terms in the earlier period. It was a device that helped missionaries interpret opposition of Africans to the colonial order as something not to be taken seriously. By means of it Kumm and his colleagues could square colonial “liberty” with the fact that it had to be forced upon Nigerians in many cases. Kumm dedicated one of his books “To the Nations of the Future, the Races Yet to Be,” and entitled the first chapter, “The Baby Nations of the World.” Like people, nations can be divided into adults and children. The Arian race, especially its Anglo-Saxon branch “is today in the full strength of its manhood, while in Africa and in the South Sea Islands we have the

infants of our human family. The irresponsibility, credulity, and simplicity of most of the tribes of Central Africa are in the unmistakable signs of youthfulness.” “The Negro is the ‘hobbledehoi’ of the human family. The stripling who does not know how to behave himself ..., but who, with his years, will outgrow his clumsiness.” “The ... heathen clans amongst whom we are today administering justice in Central Africa, are in our hands as little children whose fate and future we may make or mar.” Musa, a man some forty five years old, was referred to by the younger Kumm as “older than the white man in years, but in mind and soul a child” (*Khont*, 4, 7, 14-15, 172).

To avoid misunderstanding, we are not suggesting that the SUM was racist. Racism is not to be confused with paternalism. Racism assumes permanent and inherent differences between races and it places them in a hierarchical order. Africans may have sunk low, “yet even in the lowest of the low, as they are members of the human family, there is the spark divine, the feeling after God, the possibility of the higher life,” wrote Kumm (*Khont*, 105-106). Basically and potentially Africans are identical to Europeans in worth and ability. They are “our brothers and sisters in a common humanity. They are one with us in sin and ruin...” (*The Sudan*, 60). Furthermore, “careful investigation” has demonstrated that Africans can indeed attain “to a civilization such as the Indo-Germanic races have evolved.” Eventually they will “occupy a responsible and respected position in the council of the nations, the parliament of mankind.”

This process, however, is not to be rushed. It will take generations before they grow up, for they were “only in the initial stages of civilization.” In the meantime, they were children and “as children they must be treated.” The present differences lay in the exposure to

the Gospel, not in any inherent superiority (*Khont*, 9, 197, 10, 169; *Sudan*, 204).

Missionaries needed only a couple of decades to recognize the folly of such paternalism. Ruxton, a one-time colonial official who in his pre-conversion days made things difficult for the mission, prayed, “From contempt for what we are pleased to call the inferior races – which is a sin against God and treason to ourselves – may we be delivered before it is too late....” Missionary Cooper was deeply influential in having the SUM adopt the philosophy of the “three selves” and the general approach of Roland Allen. This approach emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit and the consequent greater trust and respect in and for Africans this evoked in missionaries. Maxwell, a member of the pioneer party of 1904, also rejected paternalism in the 1920s. He confessed that he and his colleagues had a secret contempt for the African that was hard to get rid of. He concluded that “one has no use for that spirit that regards an African as a being lower than a dog in the moral scale” (Boer, 321). Thus, we may happily report that the SUM soon recognized the need to rid itself of this persistent problem deep in the hearts of missionaries. In the meantime, it served well in giving a semblance of legitimacy to colonialism during the initial period.

### *Divine Imperative*

Given the attitudes describe above, it was not a far step for missionaries to recognize colonialism as a divine task imposed upon them and their countrymen to bring Africa into the Kingdom of God. Missions and colonialism were all lumped together. Kumm wrote:

Closed doors in the east have been burst open, while lone lands in the south, and in the Canadian west, are being brought under cultivation. The slave shackles have been taken from the dusky dwellers in the dark continent. The messengers of light leaving the land of fogs go far and wide with their Gospel of liberty, and love and life. This Gospel is being preached as a witness to all nations, and it seems almost time that the millennial Empire might be set up, and “the Kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ” (Boer, p. 129).

The hand of God was behind it all:

The HAND that in the century behind us has opened the long-closed doors of India, China, Korea, Japan, and the eastern world; the HAND that has flung wide the gates of Africa East and West, of Egypt, of the Congo, the Zambesi, the great lakes – the same almighty HAND is opening in this day, this greatest, darkest sphere (*Hausaland*, 19).

Britain was not to shirk this divinely imposed responsibility: “God has entrusted the Britons with more of the youthful peoples of this earth than any other white race. We are trustees, appointed by God, to shield the little ones, to teach them and to mother them until they have grown up into independence.”

It was because of the high premium Britain put on liberty, justice and related virtues that “God has seen fit to give us charge of the development of many of the native races....” Britain was presented by Kumm as organizing the resources of Africa for the good of Africa, not her own. Britain, Kumm explained, held that “she is *in loco parentis* to the backward people in her possessions, a trustee of their land and

wealth that may not be alienated.” The British have been entrusted with “a multitude of heathen tribes,” a burden of which they ought not to tire, but of which they were to be proud and to shoulder it gladly. These “sons and daughters of the Dark Continent” with “weak, infant voices appeal to us stewards of the worship of the true God, of day and light and good, out of the shadows of the midnight land. Unless we do our duty by ... these wards of ours, our modern European civilization ... will find their nemesis in the cul-de-sac of Islam.”

The responsibility of the European was great indeed, for he could influence these infant races for evil as well as good. Failure to live up to this responsibility would render the British guilty. Warned Kumm in an admonition that summarized it well:

Shall we who ... as demi-gods have stepped amongst the people of the Sudan, shall we be guilty of indirectly influencing the destiny of free races for evil rather than for good? The pagan clans of Central Africa stand before us as little children. Children they are, and we are their guardians appointed by God for their good (*Khont*, 14, 15, 213, 156, 241,242; Boer, 133-134).

Missionary Rooker expressed himself similarly with a good bit of emotion:

How strangely England was compelled to take over the Sudan! Was there no divine purpose in this occupation? And could England be so selfish as to let the River of Life flow by the Sudanese without pointing them to its healing waters? Oh no! A thousand times no! To restore justice to the oppressed, to set the captives free, to help men and women to live in peace and

comfort, to educate them in gentle arts and science – that is a noble aim worthy of an English administration (Boer, 171).

It was all well within the plan of God to establish His Kingdom. “The natives of the Sudan,” we are told, “have come under our rule, so that we, in turn, might bring them under the rule of the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.” If this was no identification of the two kingdoms, the line of demarcation became at least very blurred. Another missionary interpreted the completed railway in the Sudan in terms of Biblical prophecy. “It might be looked upon as a fulfillment of the prophecy, ‘And a highway shall be there.’ A highway for the Lord, and to be the means of spreading the gospel.” Apparently this type of interpretation was not quite acceptable to the editor who betrayed a degree of skepticism by inserting an editorial comment that this “was said in all seriousness” (Boer, 176-177).

In distinction from at least the principal death of paternalism during the years between the two world wars, the notion of the divine imperative and the near identification of colonialism with the extension of the Kingdom of God stubbornly lived on, even though it was no longer emphasized so frequently. Since it was among the mission’s purpose “to lead whole nations into light and liberty, and to shape aright their future,” any movement or organization sharing that purpose was considered an ally in the deepest sense, and that included the colonial effort. If Ruxton did not intend an actual identification in the following statement, the remark was certainly suggestive in that direction: “... may the kingdom of our God ... be extended in our time over all the people of Africa ... to His glory, their salvation, and England’s honour” (Boer, 226).

A number of statements made in *The Lightbearer* can be understood only if exegeted in the atmosphere we have tried to create in the above paragraph. Missionary Aust wrote, "The Yergum had resisted the pacific representations of the little British force and murdered some of those sent with the message of peace." Striking here is the use of terms such as "pacific" and "peace," when in actual fact these messengers were armed with an ultimatum! The expiration of the bearers of this "peace" message at the hands of the Yergum was described as "murder," a category also used to report the death of Lieutenant Alexander, an explorer, at the hands of the Wadai people. The Wadai had not yet been subdued when the lieutenant entered their territory. While he and his companions encamped themselves under a tree, they were summoned to appear before the local Chief, but the lieutenant arrogantly replied that he would see the Chief the following morning, an insulting provocation unimaginable in traditional Africa – or even today. The result was that the crowd attacked and killed him – "murdered" him, in terms of the report in *The Lightbearer*. The French subsequently scored a victory at Wadai and subdued most of the slaving chiefs of the area, a "success they have attained under God."

During 1906, Lugard was reported to have organized a punitive expedition to Hadeija in the north after the failure of three years' conciliatory efforts and after the "murder" of a soldier. In this same report the opposing emir's subjects were said to possess weapons "illegally." In a similar vein, Maxwell wrote, "The Moslem empires of the north refused to accept ... Lugard's peaceful overtures, and the murder of a British resident of Keffi precipitated a brief ... military expedition." Of course, Maxwell was aware of the military force that

was behind any so-called “peaceful overtures,” but the point was that British action was interpreted as their response to the divine imperatives to bring peace, even if forcibly. Failure to remember the mission’s perspective will lead to the conclusion that it was engaged in “double think.” Opposition to British efforts was in fact opposition to God’s design to bring peace and killing British soldiers would be murder by a law higher than of the nations. It is in this context that one must interpret the remark published upon the death of King Edward VIII: “no war marred his reign.” This statement is found in an issue of *The Lightbearer* that carried a report on the forced subjugation of a Nigerian tribe only two pages earlier (Boer, 180-181, 312)!

### *Specific Blessings*

Looking at colonialism through the spectacle of the ideology we have described, missionaries recognized many specific blessings for Africa – and for Great Britain. Kumm summarized the blessings of the *Pax Britannica* thus:

... the fruits of European conquest of the Sudan appear in the abolition of slavery, which, while not as yet fully accomplished, is speedily winning its way; in the prevention of the endless tribal wars; in the opening up of lands and linking them with the sea through the building of roads, railways and river steamers; and in the establishment of justice, righteousness and peace (Boer, 134).

Maxwell wrote, "If ever I had been an opponent of colonial expansion in this part of the world, a short stay out here would have sufficed to teach me that it would be a little short of inhuman for Great Britain to leave the unfortunate place to the misgovernment of its ... rulers." He praised the Lord for the fact that these inhuman conditions were disappearing under the British regime: "Thank God that *He* does not forget, though we may, and *He* has remembered Africa, and the slave is even now being freed." The conditions imposed upon the people are those of "peace, justice and prosperity," a combination of terms that was as classic for the early part of our century as it is for modern ecumenicals. Maxwell summarized the situation as follows: "The roads were made safe to travel, robbery was repressed, tribal warfare was put a stop to, and justice was more or less made an easy thing to obtain, though it is sometimes hard enough to get yet, and sometimes is dealt out in a very 'mailed fist' kind of way. However, we are progressing."

Maxwell was particularly struck by the initial depopulation of the towns. Whereas formerly farmers would live in the safety of towns, now that peace had come, they dared to live on their farms. "Peace is now brooding over the land. People are quitting the walled towns, having learnt they can live in the bush with safety." The walls of the towns were no longer needed and were left to dilapidate. Missionary Aust related how the Yergum tribe were coming out of their hiding places and penetrated the fertile plains. "Huts sprang up here and there, dotted all over the plains near the streams. Bush was cleared and the country gradually became the scene of prosperous little homesteads surrounded by farms." The same process was reported with respect to Wukari, Donga and Wase (Boer, 149-150, 172).

Maxwell found support for this theme from a Nigerian friend who confided that “in the old days of native rule people were only able to leave their villages and go on a journey of some distance if they went in an armed band. But now that the white man had come, he said, a single girl could roll up her sleeping mat ... and go off alone.” Maxwell beamed, “What better tribute could one desire than that of the blessing of British Administration” (Century, 120). The original party of 1904 arrived in Ibi in a river steamer owned by the Niger Company. It was called “Liberty,” a name Maxwell endorsed as most appropriate (Century, 39).

The theme of liberty and justice was prominent in the SUM’s evaluation of colonialism. In a document encouraging British churches to take up the challenge of the Sudan, the mission testified that “oppression, tyranny, and the slave trade have received ... their deathblow, and an oppressed people are now free” (Boer, 171). The real proof for it all was the natural death of the Freed Slaves’ Home in 1925. It was shut down because of lack of new arrivals (Teet, 27). The *Pax* had materialized and Britain had lived up to her mandate.

One familiar with the SUM’s magazine, *The Lightbearer*, as it is today, will be surprised at the wide range of topics discussed on its pages prior to the 1930s. Articles dealing with economic improvements brought about by colonialism were very numerous. There was deep appreciation for the direction of the economy. And it was important to the SUM that Nigerians profited from it. Maxwell cited the example of a single village where 2000 British pounds worth of oil seeds were bought by two trading firms in one month. All the money or barter goods was earned on the local farms and went to local farmers. And that, he informed his readers, “was only one place. Before British

occupation, such volume of trade was practically impossible” (*Nigeria*, 58-59). In common with his colleagues, Maxwell had admiration for all these developments. He was positive with respect to the development of the Plateau tin mines and the coal mines in the south by private enterprise. He had praise for governmental efforts to develop infrastructures to support these private projects. The telegraph system, the Lagos-Kano railway, the coinage system and the Port Harcourt harbour – for all these he lauded the government. Referring to the shift from slave trade to palm oil, he remarked, “Thus, as so often happens, the path of righteousness proved in the end more profitable than the path of self-interest and wrong” (*Nigeria*, 52, 46).

In contrast to problems in east and South Africa created by white settlers, Farrant had high appreciation for the situation in Nigeria. Here whites did not settle or own property; they could only lease it. “Let us remember you can have no more Christian thing than when you safeguard the land for the people ....” The credit for such sound arrangements must go to the government, especially to Lugard, for thus the people were encouraged to “grow up naturally, following their own callings, and not being hustled out by a cruel competition.” It was the Nigerian who was reaping “by far the greatest profit” of Nigeria’s production, while of the revenue of the entire country one half went for “the maintenance of European administration and one half to native administration.” Furthermore, the share of native administration was the responsibility of Nigerian chiefs and their councils to spend, not British. Farrant concluded, “Do you think that this is a condition in which man can grow up to the full stature of their manhood? There you have a people who will grow up as a people.” In

southern Nigeria this was already taking place: There were black medical officers treating white men, while Lagos was governed by a black man with whites subordinate to him (Boer, 300). Though on the one hand Farrant's remarks indicate ignorance concerning colonial economics, they also make abundantly clear the direction he *wanted* colonialism to take. The situation in which whites were subordinate to Nigerians may be common in our day, but for Farrant to actually *hope* for such an arrangement back in 1921 was something close to revolutionary. It was the type of thinking that represented the deepest ambitions of the SUM as a whole.

Though the mission's interest in economic matters waned for reasons we will explain in a later chapter, the basic approval of colonial economics continued right up to the end. Concerning developments in East Africa, missionary Harris reported that "at present time both politics and economics favour the development of Christianity." Christianity, not Islam, was "partly responsible for the progress Africans welcome (*LB*, Sept/1955, p. 116).

From the very beginning Kumm shared with the government ideas for undercutting existing local industries. He favoured the division of labour which allocated to Africa the role of supplier of raw materials and to Britain the role of manufacturer. He suggested that Africans involved in the spinning, weaving and dyeing industries could be set free for cultivation of cotton by importing cheaper and better British finished products (*Sudan*, 171). It takes a great deal of empathy for a modern reader to understand such a suggestion:

It would seem preferable that the natives should export cotton rather laboriously spin and weave their native material. This

could be done so much cheaper and easier in Europe for them. Once it is pointed out to the natives that by bringing in a certain amount of raw cotton, they would receive in exchange beautifully finished cloth, there should be no difficulty in greatly extending the native cotton plantations (*Hausaland*, 253).

Though most proponents of such schemes would propose them only on basis of European need with relative disregard for the future of Africa, this definitely was not the case with Kumm. Behind his suggestions was a heart deeply conscious of the divine mandate. The developments he proposed were his obedient response to this mandate and they assumed an identity of African and European interests and eventual mutual profit. He never lost sight of the fact that all these resources belonged primarily to Africans. To misappropriate them would be theft and failure to obey the mandate of trust.

Again, Kumm was not the only member of the mission to entertain such notions. One author, writing in *The Lightbearer*, advocated the already popular notion that Northern Nigeria could be the salvation of Lancashire. The British Cotton-growing Association could cause the native loom to fall into disuse when,

Instead of the women of Kano spending days in the weaving of a piece of cloth, the Association's representative will hand a piece of cloth to her in exchange for her unginning cotton; her cotton will become cloth as quickly as she can gather it from the plant. As the loom of Lancashire was doomed by the introduction of the power loom, so is the loom in Africa doomed by the introduction of Manchester-made cloth and by the British

Cotton-growing Association's willingness to purchase the cotton from the native (Boer, 175).

It takes strong historical awareness for a reader in the 1980s not to suspect the SUM of having harboured the most sinister of motives. As the mission saw it in those days, the above suggestions were compatible with a scheme that was expected to contribute to the well-being of Africa as much as to that of Europe. A purely exploitative relationship that would benefit only the British was against all intentions of the SUM. The entire colonial enterprise was seen in terms of the identification of African and European interest. The proposal with which the missionary community of today would hastily part company, could in those years be calmly suggested in a mission magazine as useful strategy for carrying out a divinely-imposed mandate of liberating Africa. There was little recognition of conflicting interests. The Earl of Crewe, Colonial Secretary of West Africa during the initial years, was quoted in the magazine as speaking of the "promise of commercial enterprise of great value, as we hope, both to the natives of Africa and to the people of this country." One was assured that "it is a point with us in the development of our trade that the native should be helped to be educated and properly treated; that he should have his reward; that his welfare should be increased as well as ours." The editor of *The Lightbearer* included many government documents because such matters were thought to be of interest to the constituency, for "everything that concerns the development of the country and the wellbeing of its inhabitants is of importance to the missionary. And we thank God that our statesmen are earnestly considering what can be done in the interests of those in Nigeria who have come under British rule" (Boer, 176).

### ***The Proud Assistant***

With such a positive view of colonialism, the SUM had no reason to be embarrassed about of her colonial connection. In fact, she exploited this theme frequently in her public relations efforts. It was a theme that was expected to hit a responsive chord in the hearts of the supporting constituency. Frequently the pages of *The Lightbearer* featured proud boasts about the role of missions in helping to establish colonial regimes. Kumm, bloated with pride, reproduced the testimony of Harry Johnston, a high-ranking official in East Africa:

... but for the influence and preparatory work of the Christian missionary societies in Africa, few of the modern European protectorates or colonies could have been founded or maintained. The ease with which the white man has planted himself in Africa as governor, exploiter, and teacher ... has been due much more to the work of the Missionary Societies than to military adventure. He has found, too, that more and more as time goes on, the work has commended itself, to those best qualified to judge it, by its practical results. The scoffer, he tells us, now scarcely exists and even the hardened pioneer is conscious that his task is made easier for him, and his relations with the native more agreeable by the presence in his vicinity of a Christian mission.

Missions were thus seen as preparatory for the colonial regime and as aids towards its maintenance. They served to make the white man less reprehensible to the African because of the missionary's comparatively close relationship with the local folk. The missions had

a spiritual interest in halting the advance of Islam, but there were also political and economic aspects to this activity. The rich resources of Africa would be lost to the British if they should fall into the hands of Islam. It was politically mandatory that the “indigenous nations owning these supplies must be given the fundamental principles on which the British Empire is built, the Bible and the faith in Christ.” The mission’s task was to

Apply our minds to the organization of the spiritual affairs of those places and peoples so as to ensure their peaceful and permanent development. It is therefore incumbent upon us to occupy strategic positions in Africa that will ally the advance of Mohammedanism or counteract it.

Should Islam gain the upper hand in Africa, “this may mean ... the stagnation of European civilization, and the re-introduction of slave raiding.” By means of Christian education, missions assist “the magnificent work our Government is doing today in these lands” and thus they help “avert the threatened danger” (*Hausaland*, 266-267, 270; *Khont*, 229-230; *Boer*, 136-137). Johnston was also quoted by another missionary as saying that “the ease with which the white man has implanted himself in Africa ... is due more to the work of missionary societies than to the use of machine guns.”

Other colonial officials gave similar glowing tributes to the colonial usefulness of missions. Morgan, a former Resident in Northern Nigeria, was unhesitatingly quoted in support of cooperation between mission and government, for the mission frequently found itself in a better situation than did government officers to keep the people quiet and peaceable. Winston Churchill, during his days as Member of

Parliament, was interpreted by the editor of *The Lightbearer* as having “paid a glowing tribute to missions.” He had indicated that if it had not been for missions, the empire would not have been kept together for twenty years. In fact, it would not have been acquired at all. They have often done what armed forces could not. Walter Miller, referring to a problem we will treat in the next chapter, pointed out the numerous ways in which missions were aiding the colonial regime:

Will not our brothers who are engaged in political work believe that in hundreds of ways which they can never know we are helping the work of the administration? And may they not see that, in seeking to win men to Christ, we are doing what is for the highest ultimate blessing of any race, and that this path along which also lies the greatest safety and blessing for our own rule (Boer, 183)?

This strong emphasis on the utility of mission to colonialism was not limited to the initial period from which the above incidents are quoted. The idea lived on into the 1930s. Ruxton described the spread of the Gospel as “a political result of conversion ... with reference to pagans is that thus a great barrier is removed and a relationship of trust becomes possible between black and white.” A letter was reproduced in *The Lightbearer* from a governor in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to the Australian-New Zealand branch of the SUM working there:

I take this opportunity to tell you how glad I am that the Mission is able to extend its work in the Province. The Mission at Heiban has amply fulfilled my expectations of it. As you know, the

original idea I had in mind in asking the Mission to ... come to Heiban was to get in touch with the particularly wild Nubas ... and make them friendly towards the Government. They had it in their mind that the Government was their enemy, and they gave sullen obedience, because they were not strong enough to oppose ... orders. We have to thank the Mission to a very great extent that the attitude of these Nubas has now entirely changed. They no longer have any fear of ... Government officials, but ... are extremely friendly. They are now easily administered and give the Government practically no trouble. This is a very great step towards civilization, and the Missions have my cordial thanks for so much facilitation work of the Government (Boer, 266-267).

Closer to home, the pacification of the Bachama tribe in Northern Nigeria was attributed by the government largely to the work of the Mission. The government had also invited the mission to help pacify another tribe that had killed some fifty colonial soldiers. When the government was finally able to move into the area, Maxwell commented, "What was begun by the administration is being peacefully and successfully carried on by the messengers of the Gospel" (*Century*, 159, 118). It is of significance to understand that even though Maxwell wrote about an earlier period, this book was published in about 1954. He would surely have written differently if he had in the meantime changed his mind. Farrant summed up the mission attitude well when he defined the relationship between government and church as complementary: they each have their own sphere, but they cooperate (Boer, 302).

After all of this, one will not be surprised to read the instructions to SUM missionaries in Nigeria that they exercise full cooperation with the government, especially

that agents of the SUM should endeavour to inculcate in the minds of their neighbors and dependants principles of loyalty to the Government and obedience to its demand in this (taxes) and other respects, pointing out the benefits of open roads, cessation of slave raiding ..., which have been conferred upon the country in return for which but a slight impost is made.

What is amazing about these instructions is that they are not an expression of support of colonialism so much as a pragmatic adjustment to a series of confrontations the mission experienced with the government. But that story is reserved for our next chapter (Boer, 185).

### *The Goal of Colonialism and Definition*

By now it should be quite clear as to which direction the SUM thought colonialism, including missions, would and should take in Africa. Eventually, wrote Kumm, Africa will “occupy a responsible and respected position in the council of the nations, the parliament of mankind” (Khont, 197). That was and remained the SUM’s goal right up to independence.

The whole idea of independence itself was considered implicit in the Gospel. “Though political independence is not usually wholly identified with Christian effort, it comes from putting trust in a people and that is harmonious with Christian doctrine.” The anonymous

author continued, "An essential implication of the Gospel is that God trusts man." In the case of Ghana, "the move to independence has been strongly influenced by Christian thought and relations with Christian countries." The desire to manage their own affairs was accepted as a "very healthy sign, for it is the sign of growth." Discussing pending self-government, Edward Smith exuded, "Undoubtedly these are exciting days in which to live, and it is a real privilege to be in Nigeria now." Thus Tett's welcome speech to the Sardauna on behalf of the Northern Missions' Council in which he expressed joy and confidence in the independence of Nigeria as well as the mission's letter to the Prime Minister expressing her pleasure at independence of Nigeria were not mere political gestures, but represented the true feelings of the SUM. Maxwell was referring to ecclesiastical development, but the following remark was representative of the mission's thinking about development as a whole. Attending a communion service in which he was merely part of the congregation while three Nigerian pastors officiated, he felt, "Isn't it great to think of it? They must increase and we must decrease...." Kumm's hopes were being realized. Farrant asserted, "Africa is now vocal, and it is economically better off than before and politically awake." She is "coming into a responsible place on the world stage...." Missions experience "very great pleasure" to see colonial nations "attain to full stature as nations" (Farrant, 15, 70, 69).

Thus the mission's happiness at independence was genuine and in keeping with her original goals. Rather than regard it as defeat, the mission could freely regard independence as the crowning achievement of British enterprise, a genuine victory.

In the independence issue of *The Lightbearer* a theme appeared that is met occasionally in nationalist literature: the contribution of the mosquito. Under the heading “The Villain Becomes the Hero,” one reads:

When bouquets have been given to the men, African and European, who have built modern Nigeria, a laurel crown must be given to the *Anopheles* mosquito. It was it that made the West Coast the “White Man’s Grave” and ensured that Europeans would be contributors and not competitors, that Africans would possess their land in peace.

It even rated a photograph (Boer, 386-387; *LB*, Sept/1960, p. 89)!

The SUM never officially defined colonialism, but, by collecting the main strands of their ideas on the topic, it is possible to construct an implicit definition with which missionaries worked, most missionaries, not only those of the SUM. Many things changed from 1904 to 1960, politically, economically, missiologically and theologically. The mission’s wide interest in the affairs of the world at the beginning was reduced to dimensions today normally associated with Anglo-Saxon Evangelicals. In spite of all these changes, the SUM never swerved from its basic elements in a definition:

Colonialism is a form of imperialism based on a divine mandate and designed to bring liberation – spiritual, cultural, economic and political – by sharing the blessings of the Christ-inspired civilization of the West with a people suffering under satanic forces of oppression, ignorance and disease, effected by a combination of political, economic and religious forces that

**cooperate under a regime seeking the benefit of both ruler and ruled.**

**It is in the light of this definition that one must understand all the positive assertions made by the SUM about colonialism.**

**The difference between this definition and the one presented in Chapter One is striking. They seem to define two totally different situations; in fact, opposite situations. If chapters one and three were published separately, one would hardly suspect that both describe the same situation. We will reserve our explanation of the striking difference for our concluding chapters.**

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**Note: This chapter is based on sections from Chapter 4, 6 and 8 of *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context*. Those wishing more details of fact and bibliography are referred to those chapters.**

## Chapter 4

### Points of Friction

A reading of the previous chapter could easily create the impression that the SUM had no problems at all with the colonial regime. It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate that in fact there were many points of disagreement and friction with the government. However, whereas in the last chapter we discussed the mission's attitude towards colonialism, we are now more concerned with their attitude towards the colonial government – and the difference is considerable. As a denomination can wander away from her original confession, so a colonial government can be unfaithful to the basic colonial mandate. One can fully espouse the confessions of a denomination while he may be unhappy with the denomination itself. Similarly, it is possible to be fully in favour of colonialism, but at the same time be unhappy about the way a regime carries out the perceived colonial task. We will now embark on an examination of the points of friction between the SUM and the colonial regime in Northern Nigeria.

Most of the problems the mission had with the government were related directly to restrictions placed upon their work. There were, however, a couple of issues of a different nature during the earlier years. The first of these was that of forced labour.

#### *Forced Labour*

Kumm first noticed the practice of employing forced labour during his visit to the German colony of Adamawa. His description of the situation was surprisingly similar to those of the Arab slaving activities:

There are hundreds of natives, unfed and unpaid, employed in strengthening the fort at Garua, and there are thousands of natives working on the roads. All these labourers are just slaves sent by the various chiefs to work off the taxes the tribe should pay. The half starved skin and bone bodies of these workers are a lamentable sight. The roads running through the country are splendid, but *the forced labour employed* in making them has entirely depopulated both sides of them. The people have run away into the bush. For five days on the road from Garua to Marau, I have counted twelve villages in ruins (Boer, 140).

The same issue surfaced again in the mission's documents during the 1920s. The prevalence and viciousness of the practice in East Africa was brought to the mission's attention mainly through the efforts of Oldham, the General Secretary of the IMC. In response to Oldham's request that the SUM join in the campaign against this practice, the executive committee of the mission expressed its sympathy with efforts to protect the natives and they were pleased at the effect already achieved by such opposition. The memorandum Oldham wrote on the issue was described as insisting mainly on the application of the principle of trusteeship to actual conditions in Africa. It was regarded "a point of imperial honour that these declarations should not in any part of the Empire be permitted to remain a form of words." They were to be translated "as effectively as possible into administrative practice." During this same period, the

SUM also joined other British Christian groups in publishing the “Colour Bar Manifesto,” a document dealing with restrictions placed upon Blacks in South Africa (Boer, 273-274). The SUM’s part was restricted to the reproduction of this manifesto in *The Lightbearer*.

### *The Gin Trade*

An issue that placed the SUM squarely in the Evangelical camp and on which missions in Nigeria expended considerable steam was that of the trade in cheap gin. We have already mentioned that the Niger Company during its monopoly days imported cheap gin in exchange for exports. As Kumm traveled aboard “*SS Liberty*,” he observed a traditional European trading station along the Niger River, marked by rows of palm oil barrels. He commented that these barrels were paid for in “gin, a vile, burning spirituous concoction – one of the blessings the white man brought to the children of the Africa forest.” In view of Kumm’s deep interest in commercial development, it is very strange that he seldom referred to this negative aspect of it, even though the trade had taken on alarming proportions. His awareness of the prevalence of this feature can hardly be squared with his frequent praise for colonial economics (Boer, 140).

The SUM became officially involved in the campaign against the gin trade. Even though the problem was largely limited to the south – it had been banned in the north – the problem received much attention in *The Lightbearer*. Anglican Bishop Tugwell received praise for his courageous attack on the “degrading traffic ... carried on by unprincipled white traders ....” He had been able to extract a promise from governmental officials that a commission would enquire into the

entire situation. In the meantime, the bishop warned, “we must ... be prepared for violent and organized opposition.” The constituency was urged to “earnestly join with him in prayer” to have this “disastrous and immoral business” come to a conclusion. When the conclusions of the enquiry were published, British Christian leaders were less than satisfied. A conference was held at Cambridge at which their disagreement was publicly aired and later reproduced in *The Lightbearer*. The government was challenged to repudiate the conclusions of the report and to strike a blow at the trade, which was said to be in violation of the Brussels General Act, “discreditable to the British name,” “derogatory to true imperialism,” and ultimately “disastrous to British trade.” An editorial from *The Times* was reproduced in *The Lightbearer* that explained the difficulties involved in proscribing the trade. It was not a matter of British trading interests, for it was manufactured by the Dutch and Germans. “No harm would be done to British trade interests if the traffic were abolished tomorrow.” The point was that the trade had been the source of much of the revenue on which development plans were based. In 1908, for example, spirit revenues amounted to more than double the income from all other trading activities combined. Nevertheless, the editor of *The Lightbearer* expressed his hope that public opinion would reject this as a legitimate source of income for these plans.

One might enquire as to the reason the mission gave so much publicity to this controversy, especially since the trade was proscribed in the north. One reason undoubtedly was that, though proscribed, its effects were not lacking in the north, for smuggling appears to have been practiced on a large scale and drunkenness was on the increase.

Mary Kingsley, no admirer of missions, suggested that missions were using this crusade as a means of whipping up support for themselves from a constituency instinctively favourable to missions. She emphasized that in West Africa there was not a quarter of the drunkenness found in Britain and not “one seventieth part of the evil, degradation and premature decay” (Moorhouse, 269-270). That temperance crusades were popular with Evangelicals at home is already known from Chapter Two. We are inclined to view the missions’ crusade as a clear example of our thesis that missions are an extension of the home front and that, therefore, one can expect such parallel activities (Boer, 187-188).

### *Government Imposed Restrictions on Missions*

The overwhelming problem that missions in Northern Nigeria faced was that of government-imposed limitations upon their work. Throughout the entire period, right up to independence, missions fought a running battle with the authorities over this issue.

From the very beginning, Lugard followed the policy of indirect rule. That is to say, he retained the existing political structures and governed through them. This was necessary because the alternative would have meant designing new suitable structures not only, but it would have aroused so much opposition that he would have had to keep a large army with all the expenses that would have entailed. After all, the regime was organized not primarily to re-organize Nigerian society so much as to create proper conditions for commerce. In order to ensure the support of the rulers of the northern people, Lugard had promised them that the “government

will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please. Mosques and prayer places will be treated with respect by us." This statement is said to have evoked a "deep and most impressive murmur of satisfaction" from the crowd (Shaw, 452-453). This Lugardian promise was subsequently used by his successors to prevent missions among Muslims, though wrongly so, according to Crampton (48). Lugard himself did not mean to exclude missions from Muslim areas. In fact, he allowed the CMS missionary Miller to preach anywhere in the North. He himself suggested to the SUM that they settle initially at Wase, a Muslim community. It was only when he noticed that missionaries did not always exercise political caution in a potentially explosive situation that he began to prevent them from entering Muslim areas.

Lugard's successors tended to oppose missions in general, but especially missions amongst Muslims. Girouard, his immediate successor, a Canadian Catholic, is said to have had bitter hatred for missions and considered them a "menace to... peace and good government" (Ayandele, 146). And he was not alone.

Government officials used all sorts of devices and excuses to restrict missionary activities. At about the beginning of World War II, suddenly the so-called "18-year" restriction was sprung on the missions. It made it illegal to teach the Christian faith to Muslim children under 18 years of age. When missions objected to this restriction, they were informed by the government that, according to the highest Muslim authorities in the land, the Qur'an does not give parents the right to such decisions. Even the Sardauna of Sokoto would not have the right to assent to such teachings. The restriction was to be placed on all permits for new mission stations. Due to

strong resistance on the part of missions, it was never really applied. However, it was one of a series of government attempts to prevent missionary progress. Farrant, whose lot it usually was to champion the cause of all Protestant missions with the government, was of the opinion that the controversy was instigated by high government officials who “generated feelings on this among Muslims” (Boer, 282, 285, 304, 395).

Another government device was the application of the category of “unsettled.” Since officials were held responsible for the safety of missionaries, they would readily prevent missionaries from entering areas that were not considered safe or fully subdued. The prohibition had some silly results. It meant, for example, that missionaries were allowed to work on one side of the road in the tiny village of Saai, but not on the other! That this rule was arbitrarily applied at times for no other reason than opposition to missions in general was demonstrated by the case of the Mumuye and Wurkum people. During the 1920s the SUM was barred from working with these groups because they were allegedly unsettled. Dawson reminded the government that thirteen years earlier they had invited missions to work the same area! A similar situation developed in Adamawa province. The SUM had been barred from working with a certain tribe because of the unsettled nature of the area. However, when the Church of the Brethren Mission pressed the government for permission in another part of the province to which the latter had even more objections, they were given permission to enter the area denied the SUM (Boer, 161, 294, 306).

The 440-yard rule was another troublesome issue. This rule prohibited Europeans from residing within 440 yards from the nearest Nigerian

community. The basic rationale for it was to protect Europeans from yellow fever. Nigerians were alleged to be hosts from which mosquitoes were infected with its germ (Kirk-Greene, 162-163). However, the rule was applied much more stringently to missions than to foreign firms. Many foreigners attached to these firms were living within 440 yards. The rule was also used to force missions to abandon buildings not even used for residential purposes.

In 1919, Governor Clifford visited Ibi, the mission's headquarters. Farrant had an interview with the Governor, who was accompanied by the local Resident, about the danger the rule meant for the mission's station at Ibi and Donga. The Resident asserted that for reasons of sanitation the Ibi station should be removed to some twenty yards outside the town wall. Three colonial firms also had their facilities inside the town, but they had not received instructions to move. When the Resident showed the Governor a map of the community, these firms were shown outside the city wall. Upon the Governor's question whether leaving the SUM at its present site would "adversely affect the sanitation of the proposed European reservation," the Resident replied negatively. The discussion ended in favour of the mission, for the Governor expressed the opinion that he did not think it necessary to force the mission to move their Donga and Ibi stations, for "when duty and sanitation clashed, duty must come first."

Of course, the above interview did not solve the basic problem, for the law itself was not repealed. In 1921, Bristow referred to the law as "a severe handicap." Bishop Smith in 1926 still complained of the difficulties. Merchants, miners and others were allowed to advance; why could not missionaries similarly live close to their work. No

stations were ever removed because of the measure, however. Slowly the heat went out of the controversy, partly because of renewed growth of towns that caused stations to be absorbed (Boer, 203, 292-293).

Closely related to the quarter-mile rule were various problems experienced with the getting and renewal of leases for the various stations. And if or when leases were granted, they were often of such short duration that the missions felt insecure and hesitated to construct permanent fixtures on the plots in question. Leases of one year were useless. United attempts were made against this measure. The 1910 Lokoja Conference requested leases for twenty-one years. The CMS and the SUM discussed making united appeals, while the mission secretaries of the North agreed also to a joint appeal, which it turned out to be Farrant's lot to make personally with Clifford, then High Commissioner. Again, the issue died a natural death, but in the meantime it generated a lot of steam with respect to stations at Ibi, Wukari, Donga and Numan (Boer, 204-205).

The presence of single missionary ladies constituted another source of friction. Single ladies employed by the government would travel either alone or in the presence of a European man. Many single nurses were stationed throughout the country without any thought of the proximity of married women. However, this same government objected to the presence of single ladies employed by the SUM. Originally, Kumm was also opposed to recruiting single ladies, his reason being the harsh living conditions. The government, however, pretended to be concerned with the questions of propriety, though this concern did not seem to be extended to those in the civil service. Officials disagreed amongst themselves on the issue as it related to

the Wukari station. It caused such confusion to Maxwell that he cried out, "This is *not* Government; it is interference." He labeled it as "simply gratuitous hindrance, capricious and tyrannical" (Boer, 158-159).

The attitude of many government officials became especially clear in their treatment of Nigerian Christians. At a conference of all Protestant missions in 1913, many instances of rough treatment were recorded. In fact, it was a concern of such proportion that it constituted a separate item on the agenda. One Nigerian Christian asked a colonial officer a question about the Bible, whereupon the officer responded by grabbing the man's Bible, throwing it on the ground and stamping on it, an action that would make a more profound impression on a Christian recently converted from Paganism than it would on the average Western Christian. Another Christian, called to witness in court, refused to swear as Muslims and Pagans were accustomed to doing. He was subsequently "browbeaten and insulted." A third Christian was instructed by an official to live four hundred yards outside his town. One government representative warned the people not to listen to missionaries (Boer, 163-164). These indignities conferred by government officials on Nigerian Christians continued right up to independence. Edward Smith, without providing details, reported in 1954 that there were many "instances of intolerance towards the Christians of Nigeria..." (Boer, 398).

### *Colonial Support of Islam*

In many areas in Africa, colonial governments not only restricted missions among Muslims, but they were accused of actively aiding the extension of Islam while they were suppressing Christianity. They would, for example, employ Muslims in comparatively prestigious positions among Pagans. Kumm told the dramatic story of the Bongo tribe as related to him by their young chief. He was told of the people's hatred for the Muslims because Arabs had for years waged war against them until they were reduced to an insignificant few, though they never succeeded in enslaving the Bongo. After the arrival of the Europeans and the resulting peace, Muslims were sent to the area in various colonial capacities and clothed in considerable prestige. What the Muslims had been unable to achieve through violence, the British achieved through peace. Aided by government appointments, Islam infiltrated the tribe. Young Bongo warriors had begun to wear Muslim robes – “fettters,” according to the young chief. The young people were beginning to follow the Muslims to their mosque (*Khont*, 201-205).

A chief in Bauchi province told Kumm that while he needed Christian teachers, the government had sent him a Muslim secretary to enable him to carry on correspondence with the British Resident. Kumm had heard rumors that the government had plans to train Muslim teachers to work among Pagans in government schools. If this rumor could be confirmed, he threatened political action at home through “some of our members of Parliament.” Kumm also wrote how the Pagan tribes in the eastern Sudan who had formerly successfully kept Islam at bay were now subjected to it through the direct policy of the government which had introduced Muslim teaching, appointed Friday, instead of Sunday, as the day of rest for the soldiers, and saw to the teaching of

Islam to the children of these soldiers in regular classes under government supervision. These soldiers were predominantly of Pagan origin, but immediately upon their enlistment they would be circumcised and turned into Muslims. Likewise, the German regime in Adamawa was supporting the spread of Islam by teaching children in a freed slaves' home the rudiments of Islam and by sending them regularly to the mosque on Fridays (Boer, 142).

It was a common problem. At the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, an American missionary quoted a British colonial official as saying that missions may as well pack up, for "we make ten Muslims to your one Christian." It was a problem, moreover, that persisted through the decades. Smith, an Anglican bishop, mentioned cases of Pagan boys forcibly enrolled in government schools where they were taught by Muslim teachers. He reported that Christian boys attending industrial schools were compelled to work on Sundays. Doris Spencer, an SUM missionary, charged that the government was prescribing school textbooks that were as good as handbooks on Islam. A secondary school student tried to resist Muslim pressure, but when a white government officer visited the school he warned the students to conform to the Muslim way. At a conference held about 1947 that included one hundred and seventeen Africans, complaints were heard that "the few secular schools in the Northern Provinces are in most cases pro-Muslim in their outlook" (Boer, 211, 281, 395).

There was the common British practice of extending the rule of Muslim emirs over Pagan tribes that formerly were not under such Muslim rule. Bukuru, a mining town close to Jos, was the focus of fears relating to this practice. As soon as the tin mines were beginning to be developed, a Hausa market sprung up, followed soon by Muslim

teachers. By the end of 1912, their call to prayer was heard where only a little while ago there was nothing but wilderness. The government was accused of aiding this practice. The Du station report for that year further elaborated. The entire Bukuru area was to be placed under the Muslim Emir of Bauchi politically, while judicially Muslim influence was extended to the area by the appointment of a Muslim judge. The judicial move was initially to be temporary, but would become permanent if proved workable. The government was said to be doing all it could to accustom the Pagans to this new Muslim regime. The fear that the mission might be requested to leave by the Emir was not unfounded, for it had its precedent. Farrant reported a similar case with respect to the Mumuye people. The mission had approval for opening a station at Kona, on the border of Mumuye territory. A month later the approval was withdrawn by the government because of objections submitted by government-appointed Muslim chiefs (Boer, 211). As late as 1955, a missionary found it necessary to warn a converted chief of "the almost impossible situation of a chief wishing to be a Christian in a Muslim governed province..." (Boer, 398).

CMS missionary Miller charged that the so-called policy of neutrality on the part of the government led to the following forms of aid to the Muslim community:

... circumcision of pagan recruits for the army and freed slave pagan children; the handing over of little pagan girls and boys, saved from slavery, to the care of Muslim Emirs, with the probability of their becoming Muslims, and to be members of Mohammedan harems; subscriptions of government to building and repairing of mosques; attendance at Mohammedan festivals

by Government officials as representatives; the gradual reduction of strong pagan tribes ... and bringing them under the rule of, and to pay their taxes to, these ... old enemies; these and many other things show the tendency of the Government policy.

Ruxton was said to be the only official to resist such government tactics. General Secretary Dawson wrote, "From all one hears, he is resisting the government's pro-Islam tactics as far as Muri Province is concerned; they want to put the Pagans everywhere under emirs, but he will not agree to it in this Province." Though Lugard's promise was often appealed to as the ground for such policies, in a meeting with him in London arranged by the Conference of British Missionary Societies, he said, "Sometimes when a soldier is told to stand up straight, he is so keen to obey that he falls over backwards" (Boer, 212).

The anti-mission attitude among government officers being what it was, the system of indirect rule was bound to have its negative effects, though cases are on record where some British officers contained some of these negatives (Boer, 289). The case of Fobir, a Pagan village, is illustrative. In 1930, the local chief had invited the SUM to his town, but before the required chain of authorities, culminating in a Muslim emir, had given their stamp of approval, almost a decade elapsed, during the course of which the chief had changed his mind! Then government officials and even the emir all sought to have him revert to his earlier position, but to no avail. Missionary Bristow was sent to persuade the chief, who then blamed the village elders for opposing a station, though Bristow thought the chief himself opposed it. The system being what it was, the chief had his way despite pressures from superiors.

The above was a unique instance of government and emir unsuccessfully pressuring a Pagan chief to accept a mission. The opposite was more often the case, namely of Muslim rulers seeking to prevent a Pagan chief from agreeing to such establishments. The normal process was for local Christians to approach the local chief who would then, if he agreed, begin activating the cumbersome chain referred to above. It was so cumbersome a process that it often proved an effective barrier, especially since certain officials in the chain were almost sure to have personal antipathy. An example was that of the chief of Igbetti. He agreed to the request of local Christians to build a church, but the Resident insisted the chief discuss it with his superior, the Alafin of Oyo, a Muslim, of whom the chief was very afraid and therefore failed to pass on the request.

Even though legally the highest traditional ruler of an area, often an emir, had the right to decide such issues, missions asserted that "in almost every case the native authority will follow what he knows or believes to be the wish of the white official." It was well known that in Muslim areas or adjacent ones colonial officers did not generally favour the establishment of Christian institutions. However, the assertion was difficult to prove, for it would involve securing evidence of Nigerians against their chiefs and officials. Stronger still, missionaries suspected that officials would often make "unofficial" suggestions to rulers so as to leave them in no doubt as to the preferred decision. When confronted with this suspicion on the part of missionaries, the government would deny it and claim that their policy was to "educate" Muslim rulers slowly in the matter of religious freedom so that the government hoped to "secure progressive relaxation of barriers...." Missionaries discussed this item

at a number of conferences and by 1931 were becoming impatient. The government countered that emirs could not be educated by simply pointing a pistol at their heads. The governor himself warned that "to force the pace would do mischief; what was required was caution in conjunction with political sense." There are indications that the government did at least occasionally make stabs at inculcating tolerance, but missions were more than a bit suspicious that their efforts left much to be desired (Boer, 290-292).

Two fascinating documents exist that deal with government opposition to missions. One is a strong speech by Bingham, the founder of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), that he gave at a missionary conference at Miango, Nigeria, in 1929. He outlined the history of such opposition so lucidly and forcefully that, according to Farrant, he had caused a change of attitude on the part of missionaries which made them move to a more militant position (Boer, 288, 500-504). The other document is a memorandum Farrant wrote for Oldham in which the author accused the government of three evils. First, he charged, the government had encouraged the spread of Islam. "The net result of twenty-nine years of rule by a government which professes to see a menace in Islam is that by their encouragement and policy there are more Moslems and Islam is better organized and more of a force than when Britain occupied the country in 1900." It was, he asserted, the colonial government that opposed missions, not the local people. Farrant also asserted that while southern Nigeria had been drawn into the western orbit, the north was directed to the Arab world and thus the government had supported the Muslim bid for spiritual hegemony. (Part of this

memorandum is reproduced as Appendix XI in the original study, pp. 500-504).

Nigerian understanding of the government as anti-Christian is a recurring theme in the documents. Farrant related the treatment accorded to the CMS in Zaria. They had been invited by the emir to settle in his city and Lugard had given permission in 1905, but in 1928, the government forced the mission to retreat from the city. Palmer apparently had made a gentleman's agreement with the CMS concerning additional stations in the Zaria emirate, but did not keep his promise, even though he did go through the motions – but let Farrant tell his own story:

Palmer went the length of instructing the Resident to ask the Emir whether he was willing that CMS should have the extra two sites. The Resident told Miller that he was about to do this and Miller replied that was tantamount to a refusal on the part of the government, since they had been instructing the emirs for twenty years past that they were against extension of missionary work in their emirates, and the Zaria emir, though a friend of his, would have no other course but to say he did not want the CMS. The Resident demurred to this, but Miller told him the thing was a farce. Later, the resident solemnly told Miller that the Emir had refused. What a game it is. Meanwhile, the Emir had told Miller that not only did he wish him to remain in Zaria, but that he was willing for him to work anywhere, but that he had to say what the government told him.

Farrant bitterly concluded the story with the comment that the Emir had learned his lesson so well that he refused further openings to the

**CMS even when the government had already promised them (Boer, 308-309).**

**With all such friction going on, it is no surprise that the relations between government and mission were so fragile that the latter prohibited all missionaries from engaging in any official correspondence with the government. This matter was considered so important that it received a place in the Principles and Constitution of 1907:**

**In view of the particular difficulties incidental to missionary work in Pagan and Moslem lands recently brought under the control of a European government and the danger of political complications, too great care and prudence cannot be exercised by the missionaries, and no step likely to involve the work in such complications should be taken without consulting the Field Council, who will immediately report to the Director if likely to develop into a matter of importance or difficulty. Any correspondence or negotiation with government officials locally should be immediately reported to the Council of Directors.**

**A field secretary was to be appointed who would conduct all communications with the government on behalf of all the branches. In addition, the International SUM Council was charged with the responsibility of settling basic policies and political matters pertaining to government in order to ensure a unified approach. These restrictions on the missionaries were taken so seriously that when Barton broke the rule, Dawson threatened to quit his post of field secretary unless disciplinary action was taken (Boer, 191-192, 275).**

### ***Missionary Response to Government Policy***

The time has come to ask what the SUM *did* about the problems it experienced with the government. There were a variety of responses. One of these was prayer, an item frequently requested in *The Lightbearer*. Prayer did not mean simply leaving the whole thing passively in God's hands; it was truly a question of *ora et labora*. Maxwell's reactions were typical. He engaged in frequent and, sometimes, almost violent complaints. Typical of him was his reaction upon receiving a letter from the government in which he was prohibited from holding services in the allegedly Muslim town of Rumaisha: "Perfectly absurd, as Rumaisha is not a Mohammedan town, nor is the chief a Mohammedan. I'd risk a good deal ... that F. thinks the chief and his people are Moslem. However, the letter contains no *order*, only an "opinion." I also have *my* opinion.

In another document Maxwell wrote that "it makes me angrier than I have been for a while with the government..." He vowed, "Notice that the letter is not an order but merely an expression of opinion. I shall not notice it in any way, but shall keep on preaching in the market as heretofore, unless I receive orders to the contrary from government. I am too hot over it to think or write coolly about it." He signed the letter, "Yours, somewhat 'again' the government."

Maxwell tended to ignore such restrictions, without really lodging an official protest or take any other action. However, in one case related to the presence of single ladies he suggested that the London headquarters take up the matter there. Several entries in his diaries that deal with confrontations with the government were accompanied by a warning to the mission's public relations

department not to publish the incidents (Boer, 158-160, 164, 316-319). The mission as a whole was reticent to publicize some of the problems they faced (Boer, 398) and often preferred behind-the-scenes pressures and negotiations. "All the government men around here read *The Lightbearer* as a rule," we are informed, "hence our anxiety at times regarding its contents" (Boer, 192).

Without distracting from the previous paragraph, it must also be pointed out that on certain issues the mission went to great lengths to keep the constituency informed by publishing articles in *The Lightbearer*. The issues of the gin trade and forced labour received such treatment in the earlier years, while the problem of freedom of religion in the constitution of independent Nigeria was given extensive coverage during the closing period. The basic problem of restrictions on the movement of missionaries received attention throughout. The articles on this last issue tended to be long and frequent and often possessed a great deal of punch.

However, this nitty-gritty of the specifics of the freedom question seldom received such publicity; that was dealt with in more restricted documents. There was a lot of negotiation going on behind the scenes both by correspondence and interviews. Such personal contacts would often degenerate into hostile discussions and include mutual recriminations, much more hostile than a reading of the materials in Chapter Three would lead us to expect. It was especially to Farrant upon whom fell the lot of having to conduct these negotiations, since he was for many years not only Field Secretary of the SUM, but also the General Secretary of the Northern Missions Council. Thus much of his work was on behalf of the entire Protestant mission community in Northern Nigeria. It was in this capacity, for example, that he wrote

memoranda for Oldham of the IMC. This organization was taking up the question of missionary freedom and brought it into the sphere of international ecumenical action.

Sometimes these ecumenical organizations would speak very forcefully against restrictions. At an all-mission conference held in Northern Nigeria in 1910, a strongly-worded resolution was passed in which it was asserted that missions "are unable to recognize restrictions" that are based upon considerations other than the maintenance of peace and order (Boer, 143). In 1926, the Conference of Missions in the Northern Provinces asked the member missions to collect concrete data on the various ways in which the government was suppressing Christian progress. The data thus collected eventually became the basis for the lengthy memorandum written by Farrant referred to earlier. In previous pages we have already provided a smattering of an interview Farrant had with the highest official in the land to indicate the spirit in which such were conducted. We have only to add that such interviews with the highest officials occurred not infrequently and that they would often come close to showdowns between the parties. It could become so tense that at one point Farrant employed military language to describe the relationship with the government: "We fight as armies henceforth." A letter from the government was interpreted "as meaning war" (Boer, 308). On at least two occasions, meetings were arranged between representatives of northern missions and government officials in London.

When one considers all the evidence, it is clear that the missions, though very careful to keep the peace as much as possible, were in no way afraid of the government. When deemed necessary, they would

carefully plan their moves, making sure they had the support of the missionary community in general, and then “sock it to them.”

### *Missionary Interpretation of Government Policy*

Finally, we must inquire as to how missionaries interpreted the reasons for the obstacles placed in their way. And what about their analysis of such practices as the gin trade and forced labour? Did they relate these problems at all to colonialism?

Forced labour and the gin trade were regarded as betrayals of true colonialism. True colonialism was a liberating movement that helped people reach their mature potential. These practices were not regarded as expressions of the deepest nature of colonialism, but as immoral aberrations. We will see in due time that their interpretation was completely opposite to that of nationalists and ecumenicals, a difference that arose directly from different definitions of colonialism itself.

As to the restrictions placed upon their work, few missionaries seem to have addressed themselves to the question as to their basic reason, though many clearly recognized it as an expression of personal aversion to Christianity on the part of government officials. Farrant was exceptional in that he discussed at length the reason he recognized. He found the primary cause in “the purpose of God.” It is easy to blame governments, he wrote, but it could be demonstrated that “it was the purpose of God to turn the messengers of the Cross first to the Pagan and not to the Moslem.” In a subsequent report to headquarters, he asserted that missions in the Sudan aimed at the

Muslim community, but were prevented and instead ended up building a virile Christian community amongst Animist peoples, peoples “kin in race to the Mohammedan tribes.” Thus the Muslim witnessed a new phenomenon of the “Christian church ... wise in the knowledge of God, taught of the Spirit, honest in character, growing apace in the wholesome and good things of Christian civilization.” Such a community was prepared by God “in order that the Mohammedan people should become dissatisfied with what they have and reach out for reconciliation with Him through Christ Jesus....” The argument, it is obvious, was borrowed from Romans 11.

As far as the human motives were concerned, Farrant recognized a clearly anti-Christian sentiment as the main cause and reserved rather strong language for it. He declared the administration “guilty of a crime.” He compared them with the “spirit which in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia has destroyed personal liberty and made the State the dictator of ideas.” The government was upholding “a principle that is repugnant to ideas of British rule.” Thus the restrictions were contrary to the spirit of British colonialism, according to Farrant, not an expression of its deepest motivation. Farrant heavily criticized the colonial government, but never colonialism itself.

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**Note:** These materials are taken from Chapters 4, 6, 8 in *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context*.

## Chapter 5

### Concrete Relations with Colonial Partners

Our aim in this chapter is to describe the concrete relationships that existed between the SUM on the one hand and her colonial partners – that was how the mission perceived them – on the other hand, i.e. with the colonial firms and government. It will be seen that, in keeping with the attitude described in Chapter Three, the mission sought in principle a relationship of cooperation and harmony, but that was not always within reach, due to the problems described in Chapter Four.

The basic tone was already set in the early days by Kumm. Not only did statements in *The Lightbearer* emphasize the desirability and reality of such cooperation, but the mission also assured colonial administrators of such intentions. Together with his counterpart in the CMS, Kumm wrote a letter to Lugard to indicate the mission's readiness to assist the government in educational efforts amongst non-Muslim peoples. Girouard, Lugard's successor, was also assured that the SUM was "desirous of working harmoniously with the government in Northern Nigeria" (Boer, 137).

#### *Relations with Firms*

On the whole the relations between the SUM and colonial firms were cordial. There was a lot of social traffic between them. The reader of Maxwell's diaries will be struck by the frequency of such occasions, though social intercourse with government personnel was even more frequent, possibly because they were more in number. Maxwell had a choice of two companies, the Niger Company and the John Holt Company. The mission was a regular customer in their shops. One important service these companies performed for the mission was that of cashing checks for a commission and about which there were occasional disagreements, especially with the Niger Company. At one time Maxwell recorded his delight at having a check cashed with the smaller John Holt Company, for it indicated to him the end of the Niger Company's monopoly over such affairs in Ibi. It would appear that the company's monopoly had been a source of friction. Apart from such occasional strains, globally speaking one can only describe their relationship as mutually helpful. They would use each other's river vessels. Maxwell rented out the mission's barge to the Niger Company, while the John Holt Company not infrequently allowed missionaries the use of their guesthouse in Lokoja free of charge. Maxwell also recorded with gratitude that the company was "very merciful about our fares and freight" (Boer, 155-156). Originally, the SUM was entirely dependent on the Niger Company for transport of its goods as well as its banking services. All the salaries – "allowances" as SUM staff called them – were initially forwarded through the company's facilities. The company transported goods into the interior at exceptionally favourable rates. Later they also offered to transfer the personal belongings of missionaries free of charge, a privilege

missionaries abused when, according to the company, they imported more personal goods than was expected.

These relations and services were so important to the mission that the executive committee warned the staff against arousing the ire of the Niger Company. The question arose whether or not staff should be allowed to engage in trading. The mission at first gave tentative approval, but added the warning that care must be taken since anyone engaging in “any system of trade will have to face the resentment and opposition of the Niger Company.

The SUM also had good working relationship with the mining industry on the Plateau. Farrant mentioned several instances where missionaries made use of mining companies’ facilities for residence or rest. Bristow itinerated along a route with five unoccupied mining camps which he used as rest houses. The Jarawan Kogi camp was temporarily used as mission residence with the approval of the company. Another house was used by the mission on the sole condition that they would vacate whenever the company would need it. Yet the more than superficial difference of interest was appreciated. Commenting on changes within the industry, missionary Bailey predicted that “our opportunity of working upon a simple unspoilt population may be sacrificed to the greed of gain” (Boer, 186-187).

### *Relations with the Government*

The forms of cooperation with various levels of the colonial government were myriad. In this summary we can only give some

indication of its extent. Besides the extensive social intercourse to which we have already referred, there were many instances of unofficial relationships from which the mission especially profited. Kumm studied Hausa in Tripoli. When the Resident of Bauchi Province spent time in that city, Kumm's house became the former's headquarters. When Maxwell was building a house, the local government engineer offered technical advice. At another time, Maxwell was allowed to purchase supplies from a government department, even though such was against department rules. On a more personal level, we read of Ruxton's wife lending her "fancy hammock" to Mrs. Guinter, a missionary, for the strenuous trek from Ibi to Wukari (Boer, 155).

Of course, official relationships were much more numerous and sometimes they would overlap so that it is hard to know whether to classify them as official or unofficial. It was only natural that upon the arrival of the initial party of four in 1904, the members should be distributed among the senior government officers in Ibi and that their loads were removed by a "detachment of convicts, guarded by policemen with guns." Kumm was the guest of both Lugard and his deputy. Lugard allowed the SUM to import their supplies duty free, he granted a reduction to missionaries using government steamers and he promised help for building a road to the Wase station. Even Girouard, known though he was for his antipathy for missions, granted Kumm various amenities, including the rent of a complex of government buildings for the ridiculous rent of one shilling per annum! He also arranged for a special train to take Kumm to Barejuto (Boer, 138-139). Though at first the SUM used the services of the companies for her financial transactions, later it was done through

government channels because the latter would do it free of charge. The government built a church at Lokoja by means of prisoner labour at no cost to the CMS. The government physician at Ibi would charge missionaries only about one quarter of the normal fee. The death of Mrs. Hoskins, a South African missionary, provided the occasion for full cooperation of the colonial team members. All the Europeans in Ibi, nineteen in number, attended the funeral. While the Niger Company provided the casket, the government had the grave dug, supplied the pallbearers in the form of a police squad and draped the coffin with the British flag. Mrs. Ruxton sent a cross of flowers. It was not all one-way traffic. Maxwell used to teach Hausa to government officers, while missionary Hayward served for a while as district officer.

During the second period, the mission received the support of the government in stopping certain traditional practices they considered undesirable, such as "child murder and ritual murder," the killing of twins and the practice of having barbers operate on women's breasts, which caused many abscesses. The mission persuaded the government to exempt leprosy patients in recognized camps from paying taxes. They also asked them to exempt farmers from forced paid labour in the mines in the farming season during World War II. Having found a government truck that had gone off the road, missionary Potter took it to Ibi with one hurt passenger and then drove it for the government a whole week to haul materials needed for the construction of bridges. The mission provided a supervisor for the construction of a government building at a monthly rate of €50. The mission community as a whole requested reduced fares when traveling by railway. One enactment that really pleased the SUM was

the recognition of Sunday as the official day of rest in certain parts of the north. Missions hoped that the measure would be made to cover the entire north, including the Muslim area (Boer, 277-279). Farrant was appointed to the Board of Control of the government-owned Gaskiya Corporation. In 1931, Maxwell invited the district officer and other whites for dinner on Armistice Day. Three days later the officer sent a gang to cut down the tall grasses around the mission compound (Boer, 302, 315).

Several occasions are recorded of the government's introducing either individual missionaries or the mission as a whole to Nigerians. The arrival of missionary Baker, a Black Jamaican, apparently presented a potential problem to the Resident at Ibi. In order to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the King of Ibi, the Resident required of the former that Baker be received "with the respect due to a white man." The SUM was introduced to the King of the Yergam people by an assistant Resident. During the final period, we read of a missionary who trekked through the Gwoza area with a high government official. During this same period, missionary Timmer was seconded to the government's Gaskiya Corporation. Missionaries helped in the 1959 elections as supervisors. Bachelor, the mission's agricultural expert, was sought by the government for cooperation in fertilizer experiments (Boer, 179, 190, 394).

Having summarized a great variety of miscellaneous forms of cooperation between the mission and the government, we now wish to examine the larger areas of cooperation, beginning with the Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves' Home. The government owned this home, but requested the SUM to take it over. The mission accepted, though they expected the government to continue to support it financially. The

government agreed to this and, in addition, also paid for other *ad hoc* expenses. Though this cooperative effort was not without friction, since such friction was in no way related to the colonial connection, we do not need to describe them. The home was closed in the mid 1920s due to the fact that there were no more freed slaves to care for (Boer, 139, 157, 188-189, 277).

There was no area of greater cooperation than that of education. According to Maxwell, the main reason the mission should cooperate in education was to reduce the need for the government to produce her own teachers, teachers that were invariably recruited from among Muslims. He regarded it a critical matter. "Missions, it's up to *you* to provide teachers that Government will recognize as qualified for the Pagan districts, so that the schools in them need not be taught by Moslems." Thus, though he did not have any confidence in the intentions of officials, he pushed ahead with cooperation.

Maxwell realized that if the mission was to take up the challenge of education, it would have to accept grants from the government, for mission resources would be insufficient for such a huge task. He was willing to seek such, but with mixed feelings. He did not wish the mission to appear as recipients of gracious favours from the government and therefore opposed automatic application for grants. "Let us deserve it first," was his attitude, "and *then* apply." Hence when Ruxton had procured grant money for this purpose and planned to distribute it according to results already obtained, Maxwell proposed to the mission that it be accepted on those terms.

Maxwell insisted also on yet an additional condition for accepting such grants, one that he expressed several times and that indicates

his deep suspicion of government motives. It was that missions must “retain complete control of the schools.” Back in 1910, Ruxton and another official tried to persuade Maxwell to insert alterations in the resolutions of the Protestant Missionary Conference of Lokoja that would increase government control over the schools, but Maxwell adamantly refused: “No sir, our schools are *ours*. If we get government grants, we shall ask them for *results only*; we shall present children for examination in subjects for proficiency in which grants may be made, but as to our schedules, our timetables, our mode and spirit of teaching – hands off” (Boer, 163).

The Lokoja Conference of 1910 agreed with Maxwell. Not much came of the grants, but by 1913 discussions and consultations on the subject increased. The 1913 Lokoja Conference expressed interest in training students for the civil service and for commercial clerks; they intended to seek government advice and cooperation in the matter. They also declared themselves in favour of cooperation with the government in the production of textbooks “and in other questions pertaining to education.” In 1914, the mission discussed these concerns with the government’s education officer, Hans Visscher, a former CMS missionary. In 1915, the SUM accepted the government’s offer to sell textbooks to the mission. Field Secretary Dawson expressed the basic idea entertained by the missionaries on this score. It is the government’s business to promote education, while the mission is interested only in evangelism and training of church leaders. Hence, the mission should “secure the advantage of Christianity of the education by Government to the people.” This should be done by placing a teacher in each school to teach religion and by issuing Christian literature. Visscher was reported to have

stated that the government would expect the missions to supply the teachers for “distinctly Christian religious instruction.” He concluded, “We think ... that it is a matter for congratulations that Government should save us the trouble of issuing school books and opening schools, and leave us free ... to devote our energies to more direct Christian propaganda.”

In 1913, the government planned an elementary school in Ibi for chiefs’ sons. Both Ruxton and Visscher wanted a missionary as headmaster who would be paid by the government, but they were alone in government for favouring such mission involvement. Dawson favoured such arrangement because the alternative would be a Muslim principal, while the mission would be allowed merely to come in occasionally to teach religion. The arrangement would amount to the government “paying our men to do the work the Mission sent them out to do, and providing the scholars for them to teach and win for Christ; and Government can get pupils in a way we cannot.” The plans did not materialize, for Ruxton went on leave and that left no one to push for the mission’s interest.

When he saw his plans dashed, Ruxton suggested to Dawson that the SUM make an offer directly to Lugard, who was the Governor-General of all Nigeria, to cooperate. While on home leave, Ruxton met unofficially with mission executives in London and suggested ecumenical pressure on the government. But already prior to Ruxton’s suggestions, the mission at home had approached Lugard together with the CMS and a working agreement had been made between the two missions to regularly address the government jointly on educational matters. The result was a considerable number of joint

presentations. A more Lugardian policy was finally offered to the missions during World War I.

In spite of all the plans and controversies, the education of non-Muslim tribes was not getting off the ground. The provincial government then appointed a clergyman, Bargery, as Director of Education in Pagan Areas and missions were *asked* to cooperate in education. The aim was education with a strong emphasis on character building and religion. In Pagan areas, only the Christian religion was to be taught, not Islam. Religious instruction was, furthermore, to be compulsory for these schools, though objectors had the right to be excused during this time. The policy was judged so favourably by the mission that they not only agreed to participate but also placed some of their own schools in this government scheme. It was agreed that graduates from approved mission schools would be recognized and eligible to compete for positions on the same basis as graduates from government schools.

At one level, then, the struggle by the mission for cooperation with the government in education had been won, but at another front new frictions arose. The missions sought government aid to supplement the income of mission schools. Though it was a struggle, the missions had their way. However, by 1916, it appeared that these grants were not without strings, for the government presented an ordinance prohibiting grants to mission schools established after the law went into effect. The ordinance in effect curbed the establishment of new mission schools, for the mission's resources were too slender to continue their expansion programme without such grants. According to Crampton, it represented an attempt of the Colonial Office to oppose the uncontrolled expansion of mission education even in the

non-Muslim areas (Crampton, 93). The missions together objected strongly to the measure. A letter of protest was sent to the Governor-General in which three objections were listed: (1) It was discriminatory; (2) Its definition of schools was too wide so as to include even choirs, Sunday schools, catechumenate classes and even sewing classes; and (3) It was in effect a withdrawal of the earlier promises of cooperation in Pagan education. The letter ended with an implied threat: "The present Ordinance ... would scarcely appeal to our friends and supporters in the Homeland as an 'encouragement.'" At the home front, both the CMS and SUM appealed to the Colonial Office and the SIM was encouraged to do likewise. Only two months later, the SUM received the reply: the ordinance had been approved and there was no hope of repeal. The missions did not relent. A "desultory correspondence for about five years with a succession of officials" took place and eventually success was booked.

In 1918, the SUM's executive committee instructed their secretary to investigate British educational codes in other British African colonies "for comparison with that in Nigeria and take further action there if necessary" (Boer, 192-195).

During the middle decades, Bristow emerged as the SUM's main educational strategist. He sought the cooperation of the government once again in getting chiefs and other prominent citizens to send their sons to mission schools. During the 1930s, the government of Plateau Province again proposed that missions undertake all primary schooling in the province, but, again, it was never put into practice. A main issue was still that of government grants to mission schools. On the whole they were recognized as necessary, but they were still accepted with trepidation. Oldham advised the SUM to prepare for

the near future when the government was likely to seek closer cooperation with missions in education and that even larger grants could be expected. A national conference in Nigeria in which the SUM participated in 1928 expressed appreciation for such financial aid.

In 1942, the government adopted a new education scheme in relation to the Development and Welfare Fund that would provide for almost wholesale government support of education, including that of missions. Bristow wrote a memorandum discussing the scheme and all its implications. He recommended acceptance and the mission agreed.

Time and again the mission agreed to grants, but the suspicion with respect to government intentions never waned. Some felt the government sought to use the mission for its own aims. Grants would be accepted only “when given unconditionally,” to make sure no limits would result on “the mission’s spiritual work.” When grants were offered for the Gindiri Training School, the mission instructed Bristow to enquire as to the implications. Farrant received a letter from the government attempting to allay the mission’s suspicions: “I hope that you are not under the impression that by taking a grant you are terribly bound? There is a more broadminded view now. It is the spirit and not the letter that we go by.” In 1943, the question cropped up again with respect to Gindiri, this time focusing on capital expenditures. Grants were accepted on condition that no strings be attached “prejudicial to freedom of religious teaching....” In 1941, Farrant sent a circular to SUM missionaries to solicit their opinion on government grants. The responses ranged from wholehearted acceptance to outright rejection. The main reasons for rejection were basically two-fold: (1) It would create a class distinction among church

workers, since teachers would get a much higher salary than the church could every pay pastors and evangelists; (2) These grants would give more power to the government in mission schools, with the result of increasing secularization. Some presented arguments for as well as against subsidies. Spencer felt that one advantage would be improved school equipment. Suffill was optimistic that with teachers off the church's payroll, the church should be able to raise sufficient funds to provide adequately for those remaining her responsibility. Wood of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) favoured mission acceptance of government proposals.

Grants were often considered acceptable simply because the alternatives were worse. The threat of Muslim influence in government schools meant the mission would have to press on with insufficient means. Bristow favoured the government scheme of the 1940s for such reasons. "Roman Catholics and others" would take full advantage of the scheme and leave the SUM behind. "There are," he asserted, "only two alternatives, either we must learn to understand and drive the '1942 model' ... or else sit on the roadside watching the cloud of dust disappearing over the horizon." In addition, Nigerian Christians would insist on accepting the scheme. No one ever brought into the discussion the considerations advanced by nationalists, which we shall examine in the next chapter.

There was a clear ambivalence on the part of the government. While on the one hand they actively sought mission cooperation in education, there were many instances where government discriminated against Christianity in favour of Islam. Sometimes this was the result not so much of official policies as it was individual preference on the part of officials or it was implied in the practice of

indirect rule. Anglican Bishop Smith mentioned a case of Pagan boys forcibly enrolled in government schools where they were taught by Muslim teachers from Muslim textbooks and “morally bound to become Muslims.” He further reported that Christian boys in industrial schools were compelled to work on Sunday. During the 1940s, missionary Doris Spencer accused the government of prescribing textbooks that were clearly Muslim inspired. She commented, “Were children in schools for Moslems only given reading books upholding Christian doctrine ..., there would quickly be strong objections made. Her comments referred to the Hausa reader series, *Magana Jari ce*. She claimed Muslims were exerting strong pressure against Christian teaching of Muslim children in government schools and felt that Christians should display similar zeal to prevent their children from being exposed to Muslim influence. “Instead of this,” she complained, “we get approved school books made almost into handbooks on Mohammedanism.” In another report, we are told of a student in a government school who tried to take a Christian stand, “but the Moslem teacher told the visiting ‘White Man’ and this official told the boy he must conform to the Moslem religion.” “How difficult it is,” the author lamented, “when the Government definitely takes the side of the False Prophet.”

Some cases were reported of Muslim rulers seeking to prevent children from attending mission schools. Tett related that “Moslem overlords use threats to prevent the Pagan peoples from allowing their children to attend our Classes for Religious Instruction (CRI).” In the same area, a local chief was instructed by his Muslim district head not to send boys to such CRIs. When one father wished to send his boy, he told the local missionary that he could not do so unless he

received permission either from the emir or the district officer. In this case, the latter supported the father.

The Conference of Missions for the Northern Provinces asserted their rights by applying “for a right of entry into Government pagan schools for the purpose of giving religious instruction of a non-denominational character to such pupils as desire it.” The same conference demanded also that missions be given representation on the Board of Education for Northern Provinces as well as on provincial boards. At the next conference in 1932, the secretary reported that the government had accepted both demands. These were important steps for the missions in that they thus got a voice in the decision-making process. The missions thus scored a significant victory in their crusade for rights and religious freedom.

Throughout the middle decades there were uncertainty and friction with respect to the education of Muslim children. It appears that for a while it was prohibited to receive Muslim children in Christian schools. A breakthrough occurred that allowed Muslim children to attend such schools, provided the manager of the school was certain the parents realized the Christian nature of the school. However, in the early 1940s the government denied Muslim parents the right to make such decisions for children under eighteen. A writer in *The Lightbearer* commented that “When so much is made of the object of the present war being a struggle for personal liberty, this is a strange denial of it.” The excuse of the government for this action was based on Islamic law which does not acknowledge such a right of parents, a judgment obtained from “the two most influential emirs,” that is the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano. These two Muslim leaders even disclaimed for themselves the authority for such a decision. A

clause to this effect was to be inserted as a condition for all new stations, in medical work as well as in schools (Boer, 279-282).

Farrant pointed to the failure of missions to live up to their responsibility by not meeting government standards of efficiency. Missions must rise to the occasion, for it had become “fairly obvious that Government education will either be Mohammedan or else without religious value ..., and that Government schools offer no hope at all ... for the satisfactory education of Christian children.” He also accused the government of some of the practices already listed above. Lugard had determined that education was to have a religious bias in order to build up morality, but when the government actually founded schools in Pagan areas, Farrant lamented, they would prohibit the teaching of religion. The final result was that “educationally the Government has been a proselytizing force” for Islam (Boer, 303).

During the closing period, educational cooperation retained much the same flavour. The mission requested salary grants for industrial training as well as for the School for the Blind and the government agreed. Salary grants were also requested for a number of individual mission educationists.

There was some, but not much, sense of danger in such cooperation even during this period, in spite of nationalist warnings. After all, the Sardauna, the Sultan of Sokoto, himself praised the mission’s efforts and expressed desire of continuation after independence. The mission was called upon by an independent Nigerian government to “serve on committees, and to help with new syllabuses, etc. Some of the staff are busy writing textbooks....” There was a degree of the traditional

Evangelical fear of losing the evangelistic thrust under the pressure of social services, but no fears were expressed at the possibility of being regarded as imperialists by nationalists (Boer, 395).

The last major area of cooperation we wish to describe is that of public health or medical work. The story of cooperation in this area is basically similar to that in education, except that it was less extensive. With very few exceptions, most references in the sources to medical cooperation include indications of hesitation on the part of the mission. A happy example of such an exception was the government's allowing the mission to purchase drugs from the former's medical stores in Lagos during World War II when all private sources had been exhausted. This arrangement was such a relief that Chandler, a medical missionary, felt moved to thank God for this provision. Oldham advised the mission that, as in education, they should get prepared for new forms of medical cooperation with the government.

Beyond these two references, all others betray this undercurrent of suspicion. A conference of missions at Port Harcourt recorded its pleasure at the cooperative spirit of the government and pledged in turn to help in raising health standards. Nevertheless, the conference stressed that "the value of the offer is contingent upon any conditions attached to it." It was stipulated that

the scheme should be fully cooperative, involving trust on both sides. On the one hand, we recognize that the Government will require safeguards to see that grants are used for the purposes for which they are made. On the other hand, it is necessary to ensure in our hospitals and dispensaries that they have freedom of action as Christian Missions, and that cooperation shall not

denigrate into undue interference. To this end we consider a Board of Medical Services ... should be appointed on which the Missions should have an adequate representation.

In 1930, the government invited the SUM to have its dispensaries join the government system in order to upgrade services, but the mission refused for four reasons, two of which were technical and two based on suspicion. The latter were: (1) desire to continue to witness to patients and (2) refusal to accept any aid unless given unconditionally. The matter was settled by the government promising aid for mission dispensaries under these conditions in places where there was no government dispensary. In 1931, local authorities granted 100 Pounds for a dispensary at Panyam, but it was mission policy not to accept such grants for building projects and so it was going to be used for the purchase of drugs. Though we have not uncovered a statement as to the reason for this policy, there is no doubt that it was based on fear that ultimately the government might place restrictions on the work at the facility if it had been built with government funds.

Barnden, a medical missionary, lamented in 1940 that much more could be done for lepers if only the government would give more assistance. He does not appear to have been consistent on the matter of government grants, for in his reply to Farrant's circular regarding grants for education, Barnden expressed himself negatively. In his response he recalled an earlier government plan to aid the mission's medical work, but the plan "fizzled out and today we cannot get a penny out of them for even our leper work at Vom." He cited the example of a voluntary medical agency without a Christian thrust that was getting various forms of assistance, such as free rail travel and clothing for leprosy patients imported duty free. No such aid applied

to missions “because of Christianity. The attitude of the Government towards Christian leprosy institutions in Moslem areas is a warning that no help will be given to any Christian work unless it be secularized.” In 1944, Barnden reported that the mission’s hospital at Vom was receiving no government assistance.

In addition to the financial problems, there was the perennial question of the prohibition from working among Muslims, also in medical work. Finally, in 1929 Dawson reported the good news that when the government trusted the mission to act with discretion and where the native authority had agreed, the mission might “try through Christian service to win the confidence and friendship of the Moslem communities.” Though it appeared that the green light had been given, in fact the light remained at amber for some years. It was not until 1936 that the policy was translated into reality with the government’s invitation to begin mainly leprosy work in Muslim areas.

The SUM responded by applying for permission to begin leprosy work in Bornu. The government’s reply came burdened with condition for a site near Maiduguri. The following clauses were inserted in the government document: (1) The site was to be used only for medical work, not for proselytizing Muslims. “Proselytizing” was defined as the “unwelcome visitation from house to house and pressure brought to bear on a person to accept another faith.” (2) Muslim inmates must be accorded freedom of worship. (3) The residential area for missionaries was to be located one mile from the medical site. Needless to say, the mission did not find these acceptable conditions, especially because they were likely to be inserted in conditions for other sites as well. The mission submitted a protest.

Though the conditions were unacceptable, the SUM agreed to work under them at Maiduguri, because it was felt the scheme nevertheless gave “promise of a wider field of effort.” Dawson suggested that it would “mean a much wider scope for Christian witness, judiciously exercised....” The aim of the mission of the proposed colony was described as two-fold: (1) to rid Bornu of leprosy and (2) to “secure the privilege of witnessing for Christ to the one million Mohammedans in the Province.” The program would provide a reason for touring the province and opportunities for witness would not be lacking. Such work would demonstrate both the love and power of God. The welcome accorded by emirs and chiefs augured well, in spite of the odious clauses. In other words, the mission felt that somehow personnel would be able to circumvent the restrictions so that this ministry would not be neutralized. In fact, one report indicated that the dispensary in the colony was used for “religious and other classes.”

Another enlightening case was that of Nguru Hospital, also in Bornu. When the provincial resident was approached in 1939 about a station at Nguru, he advised the mission to apply for a limited mission, that is, a mission aiming only at Pagans and Christians, as it would stand a better chance of approval, especially if medical work were included. While the application was being processed, the government suddenly sprung the “18-year” restriction on the SUM. This condition was not acceptable to the mission, but there was hope it would be modified or dropped. When the government gave its general consent, the SUM did not officially accept or reject it, but the resident was verbally informed that the mission was holding the matter in abeyance till further developments were more clear. The issue was finally settled in

1944, at least with respect to the Nguru application. The “18 year” restriction was dropped and conditions similar to those at Maiduguri were accepted by both parties. Government consent came after the Shehu of Bornu, the traditional ruler of the province, indicated his agreement. The SUM accepted the arrangement, provided “the other bodies interested in the principle that was affected ... offered no objection.” The matter had been concluded basically behind the scenes by means of correspondence and interviews (Boer, 283-286).

During the year after World War II, the mission community deeply regretted the government’s continued reticence to cooperate in medical work. A medical missionary conference in 1946 pushed for very close cooperation. It suggested that the government should consult missions whenever the former contemplated new moves in medical work. It also urged that mission hospitals be recognized as the official medical facilities in their particular areas and that mission teaching hospitals be eligible for grants. Training of dispensary attendants should include both government and mission trainees. In view of the large number of leprosy patients treated by missions, the latter should receive “a fair share of the Welfare and Development Fund.” These suggestions were made because the very survival of medical missions were said to depend on their finding a “recognized place in relation to the Government Medical Services.”

We are not trying to create the impression of total lack of cooperation. The mission received grants for various medical projects. It was paid 4500 Pounds for leprosy work in Plateau Province and 1675 Pounds for more general medical work in the same area. Grants were received towards missionary allowances. Discounts were promised for leprosy supplies, while those for Nguru hospital were

imported free of duty. In Britain, SUM's Dr. Chesterman was a member of the Colonial Office Medical Advisory Committee.

The frictions stemming from divergent purposes continued into the final period. There was evidence, in fact, of increasing severity. Muir aired the complaint that even though the government was "very willing" to cooperate in education, it was "to be regretted that more regulations, particularly in medical matters, have been imposed and that it takes longer to get permission to open new work." There was the tendency on the part of the government to impose restrictions concerning evangelistic work also in leprosy colonies located amongst traditional communities. Edward Smith presented a concrete example of the Tamiya colony at Takum, a community where the Muslim population comprised no more than five percent.

During these closing years, the missions continued gallantly to oppose the various restrictions on medical work. The Northern Missions Council declared that missions were "willing to participate in all possible ways in the humanitarian services of leprosy relief," but only on condition that they would not be prevented from carrying on their evangelistic services as well, at least in the non-Muslim areas. Due to such pressures, the clauses were deleted and the government agreed to provide grants for leprosy work as well as for more general medical service and all without the restrictions they had sought to impose (Boer, 396-397).

*Mission Concern for Public Image*

With a view to Chapter Six, it is useful to ask whether or not the SUM ever recognized the dangers of too close a relationship with the colonial government. The facts of Chapter Three and of this one indicate that the mission was rather proud of its colonial connection and did little to hide it. But that is only part of the total picture.

Maxwell is a clear example of the tension missionaries at times experienced in regards to this question. In spite of everything said so far, Maxwell could be extremely eager to have Nigerians realize the difference between the mission and the colonial government. He was well aware of the attitude of many folk towards the mission and its association with the government. The missionary belonged to what the local Muslims called the "*arna masu duniya*," that is, "the heathens who control the world." The white man, including the missionary, was thought to have opted long ago for this world in preference to the next. Hence the white man could enjoy his wealth and power now, but the Muslim could be sure of receiving his consolation in the next. Maxwell sourly suggested that perhaps the SUM should cut the allowances of field staff. The local people, Maxwell felt, simply must know the difference because of the *missionary* importance of this dissociation.

Occasionally Maxwell would go to great pains to emphasize this difference. On one of his journeys, he slept on the river bank. When a local dignitary asked him why he did not stay at the government house, he replied that he was not a government man, even though he was accustomed to using these facilities rather freely.

Maxwell knew of the futility of any attempt to break this association in the minds of Nigerians. Any such attempt would be regarded as

deceit. Nigerians pointed out that all Europeans had the same colour, spoke the same language, wore the same type of clothes, lived in identical style, and had social life together. “Oh, look here, old man, you needn’t try to take us in with that yarn about your not belonging to them. You say that you are out here to preach – tell that to the marines; you only keep your real work hidden from us,” – so ran Maxwell’s interpretation of their objections. One result of this identification was that whenever the mission asked someone for a favour, it would frequently be performed as a duty. The next time government officials came in the area, they would be told that Maxwell had forced them to carry out certain tasks. “And then the fat is again in the fire,” sighed Maxwell.

The popular association of the mission with the government prevented some people from seeking help from the mission. A certain man fell ill, but for months he declined to seek help from the mission. Maxwell concluded that the reason was precisely this popular association. He wondered whether the white man’s prestige had not been working against the mission. After all, missionaries associate with residents; policemen show special respect to them; even chiefs kowtow to them. “Beware of them therefore.” A clear example of a policeman showing special respect was the time Maxwell preached in the market of Umaisha. A policeman arranged the crowd “to suit what he thought most fitting.” When the session was over, the officer escorted Maxwell part of the way home. Such gestures of politeness, innocent in themselves, would confirm in the popular mind the colonial connection.

We note then at least two different motives for Maxwell’s desire to break the popular association in the minds of Nigerians. One reason

was that it created friction with the government. The other and more important motive was that it prevented folk from coming to the missionaries.

The surprising fact is that, in spite of his keen awareness of the negative impact of the association, Maxwell continued his multifarious relationships with government and business personnel. He continued using their facilities. That there was an ambivalence on his part is clear, but it is not clear whether or not he ever experienced it as such (Boer, 164-166).

Maxwell was not alone in sensing a need for dissociation. When missionary Burt was welcomed to Wukari by the Aku Uka of the town, the latter clearly indicated that his welcome did not extend to the white man's government. Burt promptly replied that the mission was indeed not to be identified with the colonial regime.

In some localities people had suffered at the hand of the white man. The Du people were suspicious of all whites because of it. Thus missionaries amongst them did all they could to demonstrate the difference, without actually breaking up the various cooperative ventures they had struggled so hard to achieve. Missionaries were grateful when the Miango people recognized the difference after a medical missionary took care of the victims of an unjust government raid on their community. The fact that the people recognized that the mission had come to save life and not to destroy would stand in good stead when the mission wanted to open a new station.

Walter Miller, a CMS missionary, was one who saw the kind of danger about which we are enquiring. He pleaded against too close an

identification of missionaries with colonial officials. He warned his colleagues

not to claim the privileges that often accrue to a ruling caste. For it may be taken as an axiom that any apparent social or any political advantage gained, any legal victory scored by the missionary, will have disastrous effect on his work and influence. Decoration from Government, Government favour, and even too much association with Government officials, are ... not among the things which conduce the increase of Christ's Kingdom. To be too much in the limelight of Government favour is not a thing which the true missionary seeks.

Though it does not appear that Miller's warning was prompted by a basic rejection of colonialism, he did sense a danger in the association that was more basic than we have met so far. He recognized the "after-influence." After all, he was Anglican.

Another missionary, Balmer, also warned against too close an identification. His reasons were two-fold. First, the mission's dependence on government help and protection had weakened their spirit of reliance on God and devotion to their work. The second reason was more pragmatic. In practice the government favoured Islam while it sought the eradication of Paganism. The Pagan community might come to resent the missions if they noticed a close identification and thought of missions also as favouring Islam.

Missionary Baxter, in a speech welcoming Kumm home from one of his journeys, asked, "Is Africa to be in the hands of the official or in the hands of the mission?" The question received no answer, but it did indicate a distinction between the partners that was more than a

distinction in role and that implied a difference in purpose and intent greater than one might expect from an organization that regarded colonialism as divinely inspired.

In all cases cited, the desire for dissociation was a matter of missionary strategy, or pragmatic adjustment to Nigerian thought. Some missionaries were aware of the fact that not only the facts are important, but possibly even more influential is public opinion or image, right or wrong. Hence it was possible for some authors in one article to heap praise on colonialism and simultaneously also plea for dissociation.

As in the case with Maxwell, so did others not allow these considerations any serious weight in the affairs of the mission. We make this assertion in spite of Dawson's claim that "we have endeavoured to distinguish between ourselves and the Government in the midst of the folks with whom we have had to deal, feeling that identification, which they are prone to make, is not helpful in our work..." This statement was made in the context of the discussion about having a missionary headmaster at a school in Ibi. A "minor objection" had been raised that cooperation in this project would "tend to strengthen the people's idea." It was indeed seen as a minor objection that was easily brushed aside by a rather silly twist of thought:

Ruxton met this with the suggestion that this case was not one of our identifying ourselves with the Government so much as one of the Government identifying itself with us by cooperating with Christian work. In any case, we felt that any objection along

that line was unworthy of consideration in view of the issues involved.

That about expressed the pragmatic spirit in which such issues were treated (Boer, 213-215).

The materials in the previous paragraphs deal with the earliest period, but the attitude remained constant basically right up to the 1960s. During the latter years, Farrant still favoured close cooperation even though he was fully aware of nationalist sentiments. It is of significance, though, that he advised Protestants in the *Congo* to steer clear of Roman Catholics for the specific reason that the latter had come “under great disfavor because of their close collaboration with the Congo Government. Already the withdrawal of missionaries at the same time as the Belgian Government linked missions with Government.” The colonial policies there had always been more *overtly* expressive of the primary human colonial motive and displayed more openly its devastating effects. In other words, because of its less subtle character, colonialism of the Congo variety was better understood by Farrant than that practiced in Nigeria by his own countrymen. And when he understood it, he recognized the need for dissociation (Boer, 405-406).

We see thus that there was the occasional warning against close identification with the colonial regime, but it apparently hardly occurred to the mission that its association with colonialism itself could boomerang against it. It was always, with one or two possible exceptions, a warning against associating with certain negative *ad hoc* factors. Cooperation took many forms and it was often mixed with a great deal of suspicion and tension, but this tension arose not out of a

basically critical attitude towards colonialism itself so much as out of divergence of *ad hoc* purposes that, in the mind of missions, were not related to the basic purpose of true colonialism. In fact it arose out of factors that, according to the mission, were a betrayal of colonialism. Though such a situation is not unexpected by the reader of the two preceding chapters, there is also a surprising element in this when one considers the factors discussed in the next chapter.

### *Mission Attitude towards Politics*

The final issue to be discussed in this chapter is the mission's attitude toward politics. The first point to be made is that the SUM was very deeply embroiled in colonial politics. They openly and proudly supported the idea of colonialism not only, but they also supported the colonial regime in many concrete ways. They consciously aided in the pacification of certain tribes and secondly, they consciously sought to instill a sense of loyalty in the hearts of Nigerians. Furthermore, the many-faceted relationship of cooperation with the government was also in effect a testimony to the people as to the positive value of the colonial order. The mission's participation in the crusade against the gin trade and in the campaign against forced labour was also political in nature. From beginning to end the mission was embroiled in controversy with the government with respect to the freedom of religion. They applied as much political pressure as they thought useful, usually in cooperation with the wider missionary community. They also cooperated in efforts to influence the inclusion of religious liberty in the constitution of independent Nigeria.

The strange thing is that in spite of these obviously political activities, the SUM, in keeping with the missionary community as a whole, rejected any political role for themselves! At the World Missionary Conference of 1910, it was agreed that “everywhere a missionary is under a moral obligation to abstain entirely from politics.” The SUM’s archives contain a letter by the secretary of the CMS in which he states that “the CMS expressly warns its missionaries against engaging in political intrigue....” In 1950, Bristow asserted that “missionary societies in the Sudan have very wisely avoided politics, and have no intention of entering into them.” *The Lightbearer* carried an article by missionary Veary from French Equatorial Africa, who stated that, in spite of the non-political ideal, it was “of course ... impossible for a Mission of our size and importance to remain outside these political developments....” The intention, however, was clear enough (Boer, 106, 275, 390-391).

During the final period the mission began to recognize the political implications of certain aspects of her ministry. The majority of the folk amongst whom the SUM was working were largely oblivious of the political developments about them. They could end up with little or no representation in an independent government. This situation, it was suggested, “gave added importance and urgency to our ... educational work.” In other words, the political importance of the mission’s education program did not go unnoticed. Bristow lamented that “the people would have been in a better position if the missions had not been so reluctant in the past to venture upon an educational programme. All the Christians are still too backward educationally to take an active part in political leadership.” True, missions were “at long last beginning to take up educational work in a small way, but it

is probably too late to have any effect on the present situation.” Nevertheless, though few, Christians were already leading in the movement to safeguard non-Muslims interests and their leadership so far had been “wise and a credit to the quality of their Christianity.”

One missionary even recognized the political aspect of the organized church. The threat of a Muslim majority required African Christians to devise “a united front and speak with one voice to government.” Missionary Potter thought this need called for a Union Church that would comprise all the churches in which the various SUM branches had a hand in establishing – in other words, an ecclesiastical organization with a political thrust. Nigerian Christians, however, cognizant of the same problem, responded by establishing a Christian political party, the Middle Zone League, in which David Lot was the leading figure. Thus Smith very guardedly commented, “The way it will work out is not yet known.”

However, all this did not mean that the mission had now come to recognize itself as a political force, except on one issue. That issue was that of the rights of minority tribes under the new constitution. It was agreed to raise a “strong voice” regarding such rights. All avenues were to be explored, including the CCN, the IMC and African church leaders. When someone asked whether this was not interfering in politics, the answer was simple and pragmatic: if we do nothing now, the churches will feel grieved at our silence. It was subsequently decided to bring the concern to the Northern Missions Council “in an attempt to get assurance that Northern Nigerian non-Muslim minorities will have adequate representation in the various houses. Use may be made of any competent avenues, including those at home” (Boer, 392).

The mission's general pretense of political aloofness did not mean political indifference on her part. Though David Lot and Nyako, two members of COCIN, both testify that certain missionaries tried to dissuade them from their political activities, most evidence points to rather lively interest in the involvement of Nigerian Christians in politics. Bristow's comments on education are indicative of this spirit. When Lot was elected into the government, the mission was grateful. The official report for 1951 reads, "We thank God for men of such caliber in the Government of the country in these early, important and formative years of self-government." An article in *The Lightbearer* suggested, "It is indeed a cause for praise that this fine man ... should have this opportunity of exerting his Christian influence in the affairs of his country."

Especially Farrant was interested in Christian influence in government. The government may have the chair, he warned, but the Church should not "sit upon his knee. The Church is not to be courted by, or nursed by a Government. She has her own sphere. The respective tasks of Government and of Church are complementary...." He stated that "it is one of our objects to make the ... Church to be heard in the State advocating the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report." Thus it was only natural for him to appreciate any evidence of Christians having a role in the government. Upon his own appointment to the Board of Control of Gaskiya Corporation, a government-owned organization, Farrant remarked that "this is a gratifying recognition of the political importance of the non-Muslim people and lays a responsibility on them as well as giving them an opportunity of expression." When Nigerian Christians received greater recognition in tribal councils,

Farrant again rejoiced, especially because this development was welcomed by colonial officials as well. It was “a matter of praise to God when the Church by Christian living wins its way to acceptance” (Boer, 397, 391, 302).

As Nigeria pushed on to independence, Farrant’s political interests sharpened. He was very conscious of the importance of a Christian presence in political quarters. The lesson to be drawn from Paul’s going to Rome is “that there should be a vital, competent witness in seats of authority and in places where policies are made.” Referring to a common criticism that Evangelicals tend to work at the circumference and neglect the centre of society, Farrant rejected any attempt to pit the two against each other. But he did insist on the need for a missionary presence at the centre.

Like his colleagues, Farrant publicly expressed himself positively concerning David Lot’s high political offices, but he differed from most of his colleagues in that he encouraged him privately as well. He lauded the presence of Christians among a constitutional delegation to London and ascribed this accomplishment to the influence of the Word of God. Farrant was appreciative of discussions carried on by the Northern Missions Council and the CCN on “political affairs in Adamawa.”

Farrant was particularly interested in the liberty of the weak. This he regarded as an important issue for David Lot and other Christians in government to tackle as a major concern. Some of his articles deal extensively with various political topics, such as methods of election, composition of the Nigerian government, and constitutional developments. One very important political suggestion he offered

was that the Middle Belt become a separate region rather than be subsumed in the larger Northern Region. However, his concern for the weak was prompted by a more basic concern for the freedom of religion. His political interests were subservient to his missionary concern for the freedom of religion; they did not constitute an interest in politics as such.

It was also this primary religious interest that caused Farrant to be concerned with constitutional developments. Though he was deeply interested in constitutional safeguards for religious freedom, he was quite aware that such safeguards constitute no guarantees. "It looks well to have safeguards written into a constitution," he warned, "but they can be ignored or misinterpreted by government...." He suggested that "the most reliable protection for a minority is its own strength of character and stability of purpose." As far as Christians in Northern Nigeria were concerned, "their progress will depend much more upon their fidelity to Christ than on safeguards in the Constitution."

One political approach Farrant rejected was that of a Christian political party. Though he did not mention it, he was probably referring to Lot's Middle Zone League. He wrote that it was "important that Christians should learn not to make the Christian faith into a political party. It requires much wisdom to avoid it." He recounted that persecution of Christians was often based on the accusation of political interference. In tribal situations, Christians were often suspected of being a threat to traditional authorities and it was not till it became clear that they were obedient to "living chiefs" – as opposed to ancestral authorities – that the Christian community was accepted by the tribe. He continued, "There is a kind of activity,

however, which is mistaken for Christian witness, which attracts one group and permanently alienates another and makes the Christian community into a political party.” He advised that this “trap can only be avoided by a spiritual understanding of our Lord’s teaching and having a consequent love for all men. The biggest mistake of this sort that the Church in the Sudan could make would be to wall off Islam so that Moslems become impermeable by the Gospel.” One gets the impression that Farrant’s comments here were based primarily on some policies and activities of David Lot’s party that may not have been wise as admitted by Lot himself (Boer, 408-409).

Before concluding this chapter, we draw attention to a statement that spoke volumes and that was more representative of most missionaries’ political thinking than was Farrant with his keen interest. There was a general apprehension among missionaries that after independence the alleged Muslim majority in the north would make it difficult for Christians. This situation might not be so dangerous, Edward Smith thought, if only Muslims “could divorce their religion from their politics...” (Boer, 387).

Thus one notices real ambivalence on the part of the SUM with respect to politics. Though officially claiming to be non-political, in reality she was deeply embroiled. Aside from Farrant’s deep interest and frequent discussions, a few missionaries occasionally indicated in writing their awareness that politics was inescapable, because both educational policies and ecclesiastical structures had their political implications. Politics impinged itself upon the mission, mostly against her will. In a later chapter we will search for some reasons for this ambivalence and its consequences.

## Chapter 6

### Nationalist Warnings

In this chapter our aim is to summarize opinions concerning colonialism itself and missionary cooperation with it as they were publicly expressed by members of the nationalist movement. We will describe both their positive and their negative evaluation. The rationale for including this material is that nationalism was an increasingly significant component of the context within which the SUM operated.

By nationalism we mean that movement in Nigeria that was in the vanguard of upholding the prestige of African culture and that spearheaded Africa's drive to independence. Though it may not always have been representative of the people in general, the movement did represent the direction in which things were moving. Indeed, it can be said to have created that direction to a large degree. Within this movement we find both positive and negative evaluations of colonialism and missions and their relationship to each other.

#### *Evaluation of Colonialism*

##### *1. Positive Evaluation*

The destructive policies of the Niger Company were among the main reasons Nigerians in the south tended to welcome the British regime

initially. In Lagos, traders and clergy joined in rioting for an end to the company's monopoly and for the British government to take over direct administration. The western-educated Yoruba were increasingly unhappy with traditional tribal authorities, who were regarded as conservatives and morally exhausted through interminable local wars. The British were seen as providing a shortcut to modernity and when they came "it was like the opening of a prison door." The result was a fifty percent increase in Lagos trade with Africans participating as middlemen. The educated appreciated the imposed law and order (Ayandele, 178-179). Though at first hesitantly, before long the new ideas and technology were eagerly embraced by Nigerians, which response accounts mainly for its rapid spread throughout what is now Nigeria (Boer, 76).

Founders of the nationalist movement, though critical of *ad hoc* colonial measures, tended to give high praise to colonialism itself. Blyden, the father of Nigerian nationalism, referred to colonialism as "ordained by God." Macaulay asserted during the early years, "We are to a man proud today ... that we are subjects of the British crown." Educated folk "hailed British rule as salutary and indispensable in the evolution of modern Nigeria. Northern emirs voted considerable sums of money for war support (Ayandele, 203, 253, 341-342, 295). Even the more radical newspapers did not call for an abolition of colonial status so much as an end to racism and for improved economic arrangements.

During the interim period, the nationalist movement grew more restless and was characterized by a bewildering number of organizations and conferences. A notable refrain was insistence on their loyalty to the "mother country" and the empire. At the first Pan-

African Congress, for example, French rule was “eulogized.” The 1920 Congress called for dominion status within the British Empire. Constitutional changes were sought within the empire. Likewise, members of the Legislature asserted their loyalty. Even Macaulay, frequently a thorn in the colonial flesh, consented to British rule and so did the Nigerian Youth Movement during its initial years. In 1938 this organization advocated autonomy within the empire and even agreed to the principle of trusteeship rightly conceived. Even Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, popularly known as “Zik,” spoke in such terms. When Ormsby-Gore, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited Nigeria in 1926, he was given a memorandum of the National Democratic Party at Lagos. He detected no signs in it of “sedition or non-cooperation.” He commented, “One thing is at any rate clear. There is universally in British West Africa a dominating sense of loyalty to the British Crown and to the Empire.... Throughout the overwhelming mass of the people, this loyalty is no mere matter of lip service, but is demonstrably a very real thing.” In short, during the interim period there was a general mood to work within the system and to reform it (Boer, 231).

Not only did nationalists have positive things to say about colonialism, but they also sided with capitalism and opposed communism. Nationalist leaders were typical in their adherence to Victorian tenets such as belief in progress, natural harmony of interest, the role of property; in short, all the main laissez-faire doctrines. They did not demand radical alternatives in economic philosophy. That would have been impossible, wrote Langley, “for a leadership brought up on Adam Smith, Locke and Mill.” They were essentially bourgeois in their thinking (Langley, 121, 219, 224).

As to communism, it was largely rejected. “We do not believe in ... the principles of Bolshevism,” declared Bankole-Bright before the League of Nations. Some regarded communists as hypocrites. Its tactics were described by Pan-Africanists as “hampering.” And though Russia made a few half-hearted attempts to infiltrate the nationalist movement, it was hardly successful, partially because it found it difficult to hide her aversion for the bourgeois mentality of nationalists (Boer, 233; Kolarz, Ch. 11).

Such positive attitudes were entertained right up to the time of independence. In 1945, Awolowo, the dominant Yoruba leader even at the time of this writing, wrote, “We must not allow present grievances to blind us to the virtues of the Empire.” He did not object to tutelage doctrine as such; the problems were about how it was carried out. The trend was towards larger unities in the world and towards interdependence. In such a context “it would be madness to desire the breakup of the British Empire” (Awolowo, 29, 34, 36-37). On September 27, 1960, the eve of independence, the editor of *West African Pilot*, Azikiwe’s newspaper, offered the following:

Our connection with Britain has been a long and well-guided association. Sometimes it is cordial, sometimes tempestuous, but on no occasion had we cause to regret the association. In our struggles for freedom our colonial masters have often misunderstood our zeal and they did not hesitate to react in a way sometimes discouraging. But we have eventually come to the end of the journey, not as masters and ingrates, but as equals and friends. We shall ever cherish our British connection. They leave a legacy that will forever speak eloquently in their favour.

## **2. Negative Evaluation**

The initial honeymoon was soon over. The educated desired an economic revolution for which British intrusion was regarded as useful, but British political control was not part of their scheme. The inherent nature of colonialism, at first hidden under the *immediate* positive economic results, came into view when Africans were once again pushed out of business (Ayandele, 41-42, 205, 242). To the extent that the true nature of colonialism gradually revealed itself, to that extent nationalist opposition increased. At first, however, this opposition focused on specific grievances, not on colonialism itself.

Nationalists understood the power of the press. Hence a considerable number of newspapers sprang up in Lagos and through them nationalist ideology spread throughout the country. *The Lagos Standard*, a moderate paper, would criticize various government measures without attacking the colonial setup as such. When a new levy was placed on imported goods, it remarked, "...the obvious object being simply to increase revenue by every and any means." It complained about the high number of Europeans in the colony that were beginning to displace even Nigerian craftsmen such as blacksmiths. As to European civilization, it was known "from long and bitter experience." Africans had demonstrated virtues "that would put to shame the vaunted civilization of most European cities with vices and social evils unknown in Africa."

Another more radical newspaper was the *Lagos Weekly Record*, founded in 1891 by the Liberian John Payne Jackson. It was among the more popular papers. At one time it was so adamant in its nationalist

demands that all foreign advertisements were withdrawn in an effort to undermine the paper, but it stood the test and continued. Coleman reproduced a number of examples of Jackson's "pungent criticism" which "always hung on the edge of sedition." We borrow one:

One cannot refrain from speculating upon the bankruptcy of the new imperialism and the apparent decay of British imperial genius, so long as Great Britain continues to transcend the limits of political righteousness; to harbor the colour prejudice (the logical outcome of the Americanization of England ...), to legislate away the rights of her coloured subjects (as witness the South African Union Act); and to remain indifferent to the wishes of her subject dependencies (Coleman, 184-185, February 26, 1910).

It is significant to note that even this radical newspaper did not at that time call for an abolition of the colonial status, but for improved government.

By 1908, political agitation and press criticism had become intolerable for the government and the Seditious Offenses Ordinance was passed. Jackson was the first editor to be persecuted under this ordinance. The government was further aided by a new paper, *Nigerian Pioneer*, founded by a Lagos lawyer who was a friend of Lugard. This paper was generally pro-government and printed on the CMS press. Because of its defense of the government on most issues and its strong opposition to what it called the "hate mongering" of some other papers, a competitor, *Times*, referred to the paper as "the official organ of ... Lugard's administration." Attempts were made to suppress

the paper by having its mail and communications intercepted (Ayandele, 246; Boer, 77-78).

Awareness of the real nature of colonialism grew during the middle decades. It was increasingly realized that colonialism, though it had brought certain improvements to Africa, basically did not represent freedom but economic subservience. Constant were the complaints against this grating feature. The progressive exclusion of African merchants by the increasingly monopolistic expatriate firms caused a continuous cry in nationalist and business circles. A 1920 conference called for an attempt to organize African banks, African shipping facilities, cooperatives and produce-buying centers in order to overcome the disadvantages of the traditional small size of African enterprises in the face of European conglomerates. Marcus Garvey's "Black Star Line" was welcomed in view of the "difficulties ... experienced in the matter of space on British bottoms by legitimate African traders and shippers." Organizations covering almost every area of human endeavour were formed by Africans in their attempt to keep their economic heads above water (Coleman, 211-212). In 1938, the Nigerian Youth Movement organized a protest against the Cocoa Pool, which Coleman describes as a "buying agreement ... by the leading European firms exporting about ninety percent of Nigerian cocoa" (Boer, 226, 25, 232).

No one did more to spread nationalist sentiment than Zik. After studying for a decade in the U.S.A., he returned and published *Renascent Africa* to "arouse fellow Africans from their sleep." He founded *West African Pilot*, a newspaper that continued the Jackson tradition. He also formed a quartet of provincial dailies, one of which was based in Kano. His book is a powerful tract baring all African

**grievances against colonialism. Though imperialism is seen as inevitable, western colonialism is opposed especially because of the priority of profit motive. Zik addressed himself often to the problem created by the various European cartels. He would constantly encourage farmers to organize against colonial cartels or pools. African producers, he repeated endlessly, were forced to sell at unreasonably low prices. Hausa producers of cotton and groundnuts were reportedly about to forsake cash crops in favour of crops for local consumption. The pools were said to grind Africans into the dust. They clearly demonstrated the evils of capitalism with its emphasis on profit. Specific companies came occasionally under fire, including the Elder Dempster Lines and the U.A.C. The public could not really understand colonialism, for its real motives were hidden from them, Zik asserted (Boer, 234-236).**

**During the post-World War II period, nationalism grew more radical. Awolowo expressed it as follows: "Our grandfathers, with unbounded gratitude, adored the British who emancipated them from slavery and saved them from the 'horrors' of tribal wars. Our immediate fathers simply toed the line. We of today are critical, unappreciative, and do not feel we owe any debt of gratitude to the British" (Awolowo, 18).**

**Whereas earlier generations of nationalists had been reformist, i.e. they were seeking a place for the African elite *within* the colonial system, the new generation sought the cessation of colonial status. In 1945, the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester produced a "Declaration to the Colonial People of the World," written by Zik, in which freedom was demanded for all colonies. The call went out, "*Colonial and Subject Peoples of the World, Unite!*" All kinds of organizations and political parties appeared on the scene and every**

possible alignment, re-alignment and secession took place. In typical Nigerian fashion, it was all very noisy and public, hidden to no one.

Economic grievances and solutions were aired generously. At the 1945 Congress a delegate insisted “on removal of all trade restrictions and restoration of former trade conditions where under Africans did establish considerable trading houses. Wherefore better banking facilities are required to neutralize the sinister influence of local banks on African commercial and industrial enterprise.” “Local banks,” it must be understood, were all foreign-owned. The Congress declared that “the object of the imperialist powers is to exploit.” It rejected colonialism in all forms. In fact, it “equated economic with political imperialism.” Awolowo asserted that economic interest was a primary colonial motive and alleged that the interests of the people “were obviously secondary.” Referring to the good Britain was said to have done for Nigeria, he asked, “*Cui bono?*” Much of the profit went to British investors. His party aimed at processing some primary products in Nigeria and to manufacture products that could more cheaply be done in the country (Awolowo, 58, 19).

Aminu Kano, then a young Kano-based nationalist, opposed colonialism because it was milking Nigeria for British benefit. His party called for indigenous banking in the North and promised to “discourage the present foreign banking policy.” It demanded a diversification of the economy and though it would encourage foreign investment, Nigerians should always hold the major share. Zik’s *West African Pilot* continued to feature articles denouncing colonial economics right up till independence. One writer held the West responsible for Nigeria’s long period of stagnation and economic backwardness. Though he recognized that many Europeans were of

high morality, he did not expect much from them, for the real power was in capitalist hands. Two days before independence, a writer asserted that imperialists were not letting their reigns go out of kindness, but by force of changing winds. They still guarded their economic interests and would continue to depend on Nigeria's primary products and her markets. That was also said to be the reason Europeans had not and would not establish industries in their colonies. The day before independence, one again read the complaint that Nigerian purchasing agents of the marketing board were under financial disadvantage because of the 6,000 Pounds needed to set up shop (Boer, 334-338).

It should be clearly understood that nationalist activities were not hidden under a bushel. We have already taken note of the books and newspapers that emerged from these quarters. In fact nationalism was the main reason for much of the West African press. Most of the leading nationalists were closely related to some newspaper(s). Certainly, enough commotion was made to draw the issues to public attention, both in West Africa and in Britain. Anyone not aware of the ferment or the issues either was not interested in African affairs or deliberately isolated himself from these currents. If one were to object that during the first decades especially these papers would hardly find their way to the more remote regions of the SUM, it must be remembered that, e.g. the *Lagos Weekly Record* had a London-based affiliate named *The African Sentinel*. The issues were there before the public, inescapably so, and if not before the isolated missionary, certainly before the home staff.

### ***Nationalist Relationship to and Evaluation of Missions***

The first fact to be observed is that many prominent West African nationalists insisted on the Christian character of the movement. Blyden was a Presbyterian clergyman until 1901. Casely Hayford defended the nationalist movement against accusations of its non-Christian inspiration. He contended that nationalism was the “true fulfillment” of Christianity. The Christian influence on the movement has more literary monuments than we care to unveil. Ayandele speaks not only of Christian influence, but of causal relationships between the missionary and nationalist movements. There is the significant fact that most participants in the movement were graduates of mission schools. All in all, it is not surprising that a *locus classicus* of contemporary liberation theology, Luke 4:18-19, already at that time served both Blyden and Hayford as a source of inspiration (Boer, 106-107). Kwame Nkrumah, a Ghanaian and a dean of post-World War II West African nationalism, was brought up a Roman Catholic. He spent many years in the United States studying political theory, economics and theology. Among others, he obtained a bachelor of divinity degree. He often preached in Black churches and more than once was tempted to join the clergy. After having returned home, in 1954 he suddenly appeared at the dedication of a Baptist church and spoke to the congregation on the need for a spiritual foundation for Ghana. He and many like him had a fear of “organized and obligatory religion” and had a general outlook “where concern for institutional Christianity was peripheral.” However, he wanted to base his government, the first to gain independence in West Africa, on the Sermon on the Mount. For him the entire world was a mission

field that needed Christianizing. Government and politics were among the tools to implement his “Christian theory and philosophy of life.”

Back to Nigeria, missions came in for faint praise from Awolowo’s pen for their educational efforts, (Awolowo, 58) while his party included in its manifesto the need to encourage missions in their educational efforts in the north. Aminu Kano, himself a Muslim, supported the idea of missionary education even in Muslim areas. He opposed anti-Christian tendencies in Islam and was a friend of CMS missionary Miss Miller. As late as 1956, a newspaper article expressed gratitude to “the British and the missionaries” for having transformed in fifty years the “naked, stubborn and uncooperative” Plateau people “into responsible citizens” (Boer, 340-343).

The influence of Christianity upon these nationalists was obvious also from the way they made use of it, sometimes in a non-Christian way. Even Zik, who was by his own admission no Christian at the time (*Renascent*, 110-113, 188-191; Boer, 234), wrote his book in the style of Christian revivalist preachers, speaking of “my gospel” and “my evangelism regarding the new Africa.” He wrote about himself,

I have never claimed to be a New Messiah, although for reasons best known to a section of the West African Press, I have been elevated to that creditable and immortal position. It is possible that I may be one of the apostles of the New Africa, and I do not mind the ridicule with which my gospel is regarded (*Renascent*, 44, 132-133).

The Zikist movement organized the National Church of Nigeria, the superintendent of which stated: “God sends His prophets to various nations from age to age to lead, teach, succor, defend and reform His

human creations in travail, despair and decay. Thus the Arabs had Mohammed, ... the Russians had Lenin, ... the Indians had Gandhi ... and Africa has Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe." A typical service would include readings from the party manifesto, the American Declaration of Independence, *Renascent Africa*, and the Bible. Its primary objectives were "the glorification and awakening of racial and national consciousness." Coleman concludes that it was less of a religious enterprise than a strand in the nationalist movement" (Coleman, 302-303). It represented Zikist revolt against the mission churches.

Similarly, Nkrumah's party used religious symbols to increase its membership, such as "the singing of 'Lead, Kindly Light,' the reciting of nationalist prayers, and a Creed in which ... Nkrumah took the place of Christ and Sir Charles Arden-Clarke was substituted for Pontius Pilate" (Boer, 342).

Nationalists had a great deal of criticism of the missionary movement for the latter's colonial involvement. One could argue that this was more an example of the success of missionary impact than a failure. In a sense one could say that nationalists had a better grasp of the intentions of the Gospel than did their teachers, the missionaries. In Ghana, the Ashanti were reluctant to accept missionaries because of the colonial connection. They could not detect any difference between interest in peace and interest in trade. Nationalist Sarbah felt it necessary to warn missionaries in 1906: "A hint to the modern ... missionary is that he take special care, lest he become the agent of the man of commerce, or the provoking cause of a punitive expedition." The missionary was cautioned to maintain his peculiar identity, for "his most potent influence is lost, when he is suspected to be a 'traderman' or 'governor-man' ...." Hayford regarded the

missionaries as being used by the other colonial agencies without the mission's having entered into a conscious arrangement with them. Ahuma reminded missionaries that their obligations pledged them "not to fight for their own land." Though belatedly, nationalists in Lagos observed a "necessary connection" between missions and imperialism and concluded that the former paved the way for the latter. This is the explanation, according to Ayandele, for the "extraordinary but related virulence of the Lagos Press against missionary propaganda." Missions were suspected of intending "to render Africa as prey to the exploitation of traders and the unpleasant aspects of the political domination...." (Ayandele, 42, 242). According to the *Lagos Weekly Record*, Christianity was synonymous with exploitation. Coleman posits that to the nationalist the "most persuasive factor" in all of this was missionary silence on various colonial issues (Boer, 107; Coleman, 109).

As we move into the interim period, we find nationalism throughout the colonized world on the increase, especially in countries like India and Indonesia. During the 1920s, nationalists in Indonesia were discussing breaking with Christianity because of its link to colonialism. At the 1928 Jerusalem Conference of the IMC there was much more bitterness about this than the official documents indicate. Indians were giving up on missionaries for their failure to oppose injustice. In 1928 "Gold Coaster" de Graft Johnson drew attention to the political alliances of missionaries with colonialists and raised his eyebrows at the former's teaching submission to their wards. With respect to Nigeria, there was increasing cynicism about missionary motives and bitterness about missionary silence.

Zik may have received his basic education from mission schools and he may have employed the gospeleers' rhetoric, but his basic attitude to missions was negative. Referring to the "trinitarian tragedy" of the politician-trader-missionary team, he repeated the classic charge: "The religious man must, and did, teach the Native not to lay up treasures on earth; this enabled the commercial man to grab the earthly treasures and this facilitated the role of the Government to regulate how these earthly treasures are to be exported for the use of the world's industries." Though he admitted that missionaries had not been totally useless to Africa, after weighing and balancing their contributions, he came up with a debit: they had not improved the lot of the people. By their emphasis on eternal rewards for suffering in this life, he charged, missionaries broke African resistance. In short, he regarded missionaries as colonial tools (Azikiwe, 52, 190; Boer, 236-237).

West African nationalists continued to take missions to task right through the closing years. Ako Adjei charged that the churches suffered from "an irreconcilable dichotomy of secular and sacred spheres" and were largely indifferent to "the stark realities of life." He demanded that "Christian missionaries ... be actively interested in the political, economic and social affairs of territories ... to the same extent that they are ... in preaching." Nationalists continued to warn missionaries against their dubious colonial connections. Armattoe mentioned the "inherent inconsistency" that was not always apparent to the missionary, namely their identification with the commercial and political aims of their countrymen. He suggested it superficial to blame missionaries, but they were advised to pay more attention to their own people. "In the solution of the problem lies the success of

the Christian mission overseas,” according to him. As to the content of missionary education, Armattoe objected to the demoralizing practice of African students being called upon to “eulogize men like Cecil Rhodes, who consecrated his life to subduing African peoples.” He decried the image missionaries had as colonial allies because the education they offered appeared designed to facilitate British rule. He was kind enough to believe missionaries did not intentionally assist colonialism, but did fault them for not being “able to imagine themselves directly creating conditions” that would help topple colonialism. One preacher referred to missionaries as tools of economic interests. The latter had come for trade and had called in missionaries “to educate, Christianize, and to tame the natives.” In 1952 Agyeman gave a bitter critique involving missionaries:

Britain extended her dominion by the power of the “Unholy Trinity” of Western imperialism: the trader, as the Father; the missionary, as the Son; and the alien government, as the Holy Ghost. For God, for the glory of the European nations, and finally, for the exploitation of Ghana’s gold, the Europeans established permanent settlements....

The writer realized that nationalism would not have arisen without missionary schools, but it was also true that missionaries did not consciously aim at training their students towards “demanding their independence.”

The Zikist press expressed itself in similar vein. Missionary societies have not helped Nigerians in their struggle for independence. “They are the enemies of our Freedom; ... in the guise of Christianity they use our churches and schools to suppress and ridicule our political

consciousness.” Missionaries were warned that Christianity “will wax or wane according as it identifies with, or keeps aloof from, the interests of the African body politic.”

The criticism directed at churches and missions was thus not that they were political entities, but that they supported *wrong* politics. One Cudjoe expressed his indignation at “European nations who profess to be Christian irrespective of the fact that their national and international activities continue to be devoid of the teachings of Christ.” Referring to colonial “domination, oppression and exploitation,” a writer posited that “we have practiced Christian brotherhood, but those who have brought Christianity have not.” Have political influence, by all means, but let it conform to Christian tenets. In his speech to the IMC assembly in Ghana, Nkrumah requested the delegates to warn the rich nations against squandering their resources for destructive purposes rather than using them for the reconstruction of Africa and Asia. (Boer, pp. 340-342)

### ***3. Mission Evaluation of Nationalism***

Since we have not located any references to nationalism in the SUM’s minutes, we draw the conclusion that this movement was outside the purview of official action. *The Lightbearer*, however, did feature occasional articles on the topic. An article dealing with the World Missionary Conference of 1910 showed the significance of the awakening of a “new national spirit among non-Christian peoples.” The writer regarded nationalism as the basically natural phenomenon capable of good and evil, depending on the direction it would take. If “enlightened and quickened by a true vision of Christ,” it might

become the “means of regenerating the national life.” It could also turn against the advance of the Kingdom if nationalists should come to identify Christ with the West.

Farrant expected that one day someone would “cement all the African tribes into one race, and make each negro proud of that race.” Once that occurs, Africa would do “tremendous things” and historians would trace its beginning to World War I, when “black and white fought and labored in a common cause and the black felt himself to be, not the slave of, but the co-worker with, the white.” This would be an awakening requiring “careful handling,” for “awakening spells revolt.” Farrant did not fear this development. As long as there was “understanding and sympathy between ruler and ruled, awakening would mean strength and power to the whole,” he theorized. Once awakened, the people would demand education and since authorities were agreed that education without religion was self-defeating, the new movement would present a great challenge and opportunity for the Christian mission (Boer, 215-16).

Though few references occur in *The Lightbearer* to specific nationalists, the “prophet” Elijah or Braide from the south was several times singled out. Braide was an Anglican catechist who started his own religious movement in 1915. He regarded himself as the second Elijah of Malachi 4. His campaign had a strongly nationalist flavor in that he proclaimed to his considerable following that included prominent people that British power had come to an end. Maxwell described it as a “dangerous movement, whose leader declared that power was passing from the whites to the coloured people.” Another writer commented that “powerful chiefs and common people alike” were said to revere him for powers that included the ability to stop

World War I and to raise the dead. Because of his declaration of the impending end of white power, this writer also considered the movement dangerous to “government authority and Christian influence.” It was reassuring that “the great loyalty shown by the more important chiefs has held in check its more dangerous aspects” (Boer, 152-153, 215-217). Later, Maxwell criticized the government for not always taking “as bold a line of action as many missionaries would have wished” with respect to such movements.

A missionary’s opinion with respect to the so-called independent churches is an important indication as to his appreciation of nationalism or lack of it. During the late 1920s, Maxwell made references to the founding of the United Native African Church in 1891. He did not hide his scorn: “a number of malcontents at Lagos seceded from the Anglican Church and formed a nucleus of a grievous schism.” He noted that they allowed polygamy. Their clergy included some who had been dismissed by other churches for immorality. “As might be expected, one of their main activities seems to be the seduction of Christians from the orthodox congregations, while their attack on heathenism is secondary. Their members are a thorn in the flesh of every missionary....” Converts refused elsewhere were accepted by them upon payment. Though some of these charges may have been (partly) correct, Maxwell demonstrated little awareness of the reasons for such secessions, reasons that were closely related to racism and nationalism (Boer, 322).

The greatest awareness of nationalism during the interim decades was shown by Miller of the CMS. He confided that educated Africans privately told him that “bitterness has entered into their soul” because of the colour bar that sought “to keep the African in his

place.” He warned that though the British still had “ample time” in Africa, they had none to waste. Fortunately, “nationalism has not become strongly anti-British yet,” a remark that intimated sensitivity for the direction of things to come (Boer, 271).

Farrant was always optimistic with respect to the future and insisted on increasing Nigerian responsibility. Yet he did not take kindly to Zikism. He explained that the government established *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, a Hausa weekly, because of “the near-seditious tone of a considerable part of the Nigerian newspapers...” He described these as having a “terrible black versus white complex.” The “worst of them (and the cleverest)” was the *West African Pilot*. In the same document Farrant expressed his opinion concerning a nationalist meeting in Lagos, where a resolution was passed by acclamation for self-government in 15 years. “In this movement are a lot of highly paid men whose pay is entirely dependent on the white man being here. If the white man went, the black man would not give them a penny” (Boer, 301-302).

During the final years, the attitude towards nationalism was less favourable than that towards independence. Missionaries had become more aware of the movement. “The young African is highly sensitive in many ways in these days ...,” Muir wrote. Bristow observed that “the spirit of nationalism has taken hold of the country...” Provided it remained moderate in its demands, nationalism was regarded positively. “A great national spirit is abroad,” said Templeman, “which would be a fine thing if rightly fostered.” Nigerian nationalism was considered a natural phenomenon that ought not to be condemned, provided it would work towards “a peaceful revolution and not with a lot of un-Christian

harsh feelings against mission benefactors,” wrote Smith. Bristow divided nationalism into two classes: the “more stable” and an “extremely vocal minority.” The difference between them was that the former did not desire to go it alone at this juncture, while the latter was “clamouring for full self-government immediately.” In the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, anti-British emotions were fanned by extremists, but “the more responsible men” reacted strongly against this movement. Similarly, Veary of the Canadian SUM branch in Chad commented that while the mission must make it clear to nationalists “that we have not let them down in their struggle for freedom and justice,” it “cannot sanction their alliance with un-Christian malcontents and agitators.”

Nationalism was bringing uncertainty to missions. Muir reported that the nationalist spirit made “the missionary’s life more exacting.” The home constituency was warned that with the rising tide of nationalism there was a great need for speedy consolidation and for great haste to enter new doors that may soon shut. “Nationalism has many uncertain qualities in it,” Smith cautioned, “and we of the North are as uncertain of our missionary tenure as any can be.” Richmond summarized the mood well:

We don’t say that we shall be turfed out of the country in five or six years, but we do face that possibility and we are only anxious to get the job done in the shortest possible time in case that should happen. It is only a few days ago that a writer in one of the Lagos papers said that while he appreciated the work which missionaries had done, yet they were but the tools of British imperialism and that when self-government came to Nigeria as expected in 1956, then we would have to go like the rest of the

white folks. It may be wild talk, but it is an indication of the feeling on the part of many.

Nationalism was frequently viewed in relation to the main evils faced by the church. Bristow included it in a series of anti-Christian entities: the church must “meet the challenges of paganism, Islam, nationalism, materialism, and various forces of evil.” It was often seen as inspired by Communism. An annual report put the two in the same category: “The Church needs ... a strengthening and building up to enable it to stand firm against the forces of materialism, nationalism, Communism and Roman Catholicism.” In an article entitled “Literature – Christian or Communist?” nationalism is seen as clearly opposed to the former and inspired by the latter. The Nigerian riots of 1949 were reckoned a “by-product of Cominform agitation through adjacent French Equatorial Africa” and had a destructive influence upon the church. In these articles, the emphasis was on the danger of Communist nationalism to the church, while little attention was paid to the underlying cause of such movements. Veary showed some awareness of the cause when he wrote, “The seed is falling on fertile soil, for there is no denying the fact that the plight of the peasants is pitiable, and reforms are urgently needed.” The Field Council of all the SUM branches working in Nigeria commissioned someone to write a booklet on Communism and Christianity. It would be translated into Hausa and distributed widely, free of charge. It was recognized that the real need of the hour to meet the various challenges, including nationalism, was “Holy Ghost power working in and through missionaries and African alike” (Boer, 388-390).

One of the reasons missionaries and other Westerners had doubts about nationalism was its noisiness and unreasonable one-sidedness.

Its press would misinterpret facts and in general act irresponsibly, according to critics. But nationalists themselves were aware of this trait. Sometimes nationalists would regard it as virtuous. At other times as a liability. Nkrumah admitted that advocating racism “was merely a technique for coalescing ... nationalism.” Aminu Kano consciously adopted extreme positions over against the moderate stand of fellow northerner Balewa. Awolowo criticized the “criminal reticence among educated nationalists about their own shortcomings.” “Any criticism, be it from inside or outside, which truthfully portrays Nigerian’s shortcomings is bitterly resented.” “We deceive nobody but ourselves by glossing over our glaring shortcomings.” The “pernicious habit of opposing government measures, just for the sake of opposing” must be stopped (Awolowo, 33-35). An anonymous writer warned against the danger of nationalist sentimentality applied to economics. “Nationalism is flowing in the blood of every African, but when it comes to economic measures, only common sense should prevail,” he cautioned. An editor warned that foreign investment is necessary for Nigeria and “some of our irresponsible nationalists would do well to remember that.” Since 1945, British firms have lost much “where emotionally inspired nationalism has pirated British investments overnight” (Boer, 339-340).

In conclusion, we point to the great distance between missionary and nationalist evaluation of colonialism, as if they were concerned with very different realities and operated in different contexts. The reason for this difference is to be traced to their opposite conceptions of colonialism. The reasons for those different conceptions will be further analyzed in the closing chapters. One thing is clear, namely,

that the SUM learned very little from nationalism and hardly comprehended it. Consequently it had little influence on their policies.

## Chapter 7

### The Ecumenical Consensus

In this chapter our purpose is to trace the dominant opinions in the ecumenical world with respect to colonialism and missionary participation in it.

#### *The Early Years*

Though presently Christians, at least those in the West, are polarized into ecumenical and evangelical camps, this was not always the case. In fact, the ecumenical movement owes its beginning to the evangelical heirs of the revivals. It may be said that the ecumenical movement began with meetings held in 1854 in both Britain and the United States. Subsequent to these two meetings, series of meetings were held throughout the world that culminated in two major conferences held in New York (1900) and in Edinburgh (1910). The SUM, it should be noted, was present at the latter one and its representatives had a “wonderful time.” At both of these conferences there was one overriding point of agreement: behind the expansion of the West and behind all the developments of the century, there was the providential hand of God at work. We quote two speakers, one from each conference, as representative of the general opinion. Robert Speer asserted that political influence is not beyond God’s control and that it is false to think “that He stands impotent before

**the commerce and civilization of the world. I believe His hand is upon these things; that they play at least into His mighty purposes; that they are but part of His tremendous influence; that they and all the forces of life do but run resistlessly on to the great goals of God."**

**At the Edinburgh conference, a speaker put it thus:**

**It is God who overrules occasions and events, human movements and powers, for the furtherance of the Gospel. Dr. H. N. Lowry ... says, "Diplomacy has generally been unfortunate; ... but all these together, with persecutions, wars, national calamities, have been turned to the furtherance of the Gospel." Many have called attention to the overruling hand of God in connection with the Boxer uprising in China. They recognize His power and guidance in the fact that the very action which was intended to extirpate Christianity in China has had, as one of its results, an unprecedented forward movement in missionary work in that country .... These are indications of the revelation of the supernatural factor in advancing the Kingdom of God in the world.**

**God overrules; He makes use of human activities and historical movements for His purposes, regardless of human motives. It is clear that this view does not preclude criticism of colonialism and its agents. In fact, man's purpose may be directly opposite to that of God, but that does not prevent Him from utilizing or directing events for His own ends. "Many an apparent triumph to His will," a missionary suggested in 1900.**

**This latter assertion was usually related to an optimistic view with respect to the state of the world. The SUM was not alone in asserting**

that the long Christian tradition in the West had informed its civilization for centuries with the result that it was basically guided by a Christian ethic. At the same time, there was a strong consciousness that the West had exported misery, exploitation and poverty to colonies, as well as immorality, drug addiction and alcoholism. These negative aspects could only be overcome, it was felt, by missions counteracting them. Only by the influence of the Christian mission could the entire Western effort become a blessing for the subjugated peoples. Regardless of the evils produced by Western penetration, the colonial system as such was never rejected. After all, it opened the door wide to the spread of the Gospel. It was a God-given opportunity that no one dared despise or brand as evil *per se*. The new order presented missions with an unprecedented challenge that must be utilized. As one speaker put it:

Everyone of these wonderful facilities has been intended primarily to serve as handmaid to the sublime enterprise of extending and building up the kingdom ... in all the world. The hand of God is opening door after door among the nations, and in bringing into light, invention after invention, is beckoning the Church of our day to larger achievements.

If only the Christian nations would act their supposed profession, their efforts combined with those of the missions would have a wonderful effect indeed. Then the Kingdom of Christ would be planted everywhere; then the European empires would turn into *the* Kingdom. One missionary challenged, "Oh! You, the rising race of America, of Britain, and of evangelical Europe, you in whom, for better or for worse, is vested the empire of the world; make it the empire of your King Jesus!" Then a march would begin that would

lead inexorably to progress. Even if the West would not be true to its profession and were to bring shame on itself, even then this progress would be relentless, for “the ideals of ethical progress ... may be interpreted ... as the highest expressions of the central evolutionary process of the natural world.” And so the new colonial facilities of communication, railways, roads, telegraph, ocean routes are lifted into a higher plane to become highways of the Lord: “... both political and industrial developments are preparing highways for the Kingdom...” Christian nations have a responsibility over inferior nations and cultures, of which Africa is the lowest of all. Ah, the rhetoric of it all, especially that of social gospel adherents (Boer, 103-105)!

One of the fruits of the Edinburgh Conference was the founding of the IMC. However, between 1910 and the first full-fledged IMC conference in Jerusalem in 1928 a general parting of the way occurred between members of the IMC and evangelicals. The SUM never joined the IMC and hardly mentioned the Jerusalem meeting in *The Lightbearer*. The evangelical mission magazine *World Dominion* likewise treated it with a blackout. As a result of the evangelical copout, social gospel adherents basically controlled the conference.

### *The Jerusalem Decade, 1928*

Whereas the Edinburgh Conference had basically been guided by an evolutionary optimism or Social Darwinism – shared, it must be stated clearly, by the SUM – the mood at Jerusalem was less buoyant. A general growing pessimism throughout the West caused by World War I had its effect on the mission community also. Progress was still

seen possible, but not inevitable; it would depend on human morality and cooperation. The earlier role of missionaries in the colonial enterprise now became a matter of “widespread and serious heart searching.” The negative aspects of colonialism had been noted previously, but during the 1920s they received the bulk of attention. While the earlier conferences regarded the seamy sides as aberrations of true colonialism that were the result of deviance in individual morality, by 1928 there was a deep consciousness that the problem was not one of mere individual behavior, but of something inherent in Western economics that had driven it in the wrong direction. That inherent defect was identified as the primacy of profit motive.

Consequently, the profit motive came under sharp attack at Jerusalem. In the colonies, it was said, the profit motive “acts almost entirely without restraint.” McConnell, an American Methodist bishop, submitted that

when we see machinery sent to China stripped of all its safety devices as soon as it arrives, then we may well raise the question as to the control of profit. It is the desire to get large sums ... that is at the back of all the oppression arising through economic exploitation. The time has come when this profit should be thoroughly examined.

Participants from the colonies insisted that colonialism had not put an end to exploitation, but had merely given it new forms. They reported unprecedented “new contrasts between riches and poverty, new forms of human misery, new and apparently invincible organizations of wealth exploiting the ... masses.”

The culprit responsible for this situation was identified as an unbiblical dualism. That, together with individualism, had kept the church from understanding the situation and had encouraged her to participate in the erection of the order now so heavily criticized. Economist Tawney's approach was typical:

To divorce religion from the matters of social organization and economic activity which occupy nine-tenths of the life of nine-tenths of mankind, on the grounds that they are common and unclean, is to make them unclean and ultimately to destroy religion in the individual soul to which you have attempted to confine it.

It must be the task of Christianity ... to overcome that divorce. It must overcome it not in order to secularize the Church but in order to spiritualize the society. It is not a question of allowing economic interests to encroach on spiritual interests, but of dedicating man's struggle with nature, which is what ... his industry is, to the service of God in order that it may no longer be a struggle with his fellowmen.

He asserted that "the whole distinction between the life of the spirit and the fabric of society is a false antithesis" and added the warning that "we must beware of the not uncommon fallacy of saying that what we desire is a change of heart, while meaning that what we do not desire is a change of anything else."

These notions were hardly new, as we have seen from the tradition of critics at the homefront and from nationalist comments on colonialism. The novelty consisted in the fact that these problems were now considered serious issues by the mission community. In

theory at least, even Evangelicals might agree with these as legitimate Christian concerns, but they would challenge them as lying within the province of the missionary. They tended to feel, however, that it was up to the members of the new churches to address themselves to such problems; it was not a proper missionary concern – even though missions did actively support colonialism.

Ecumenicals did not accept that evangelical argument. They rested their case on two concerns. The first was that the Gospel is concerned with the entire Kingdom of God. Excluding economic and political concerns from the missionary message would mean a truncated message that would result in a warped understanding of the Christian life. The typical Christian virtues such as love, peace, joy, etc. were to be applied to the socio-economic as well as private affairs. Secondly, there was the historical fact that missionary association with colonialism was fast becoming a liability. There was a strong awareness of the bitterness growing in the hearts of nationalists everywhere about missionary participation and continued silence about colonial problems. Oldham, the general Secretary of the IMC, represented the feeling well:

... if the hearts of Asiatic and African peoples are embittered against western nations on account of their selfishness and injustice, they will be steeled against the teaching of missionaries who are representatives of these nations. The only means by which this danger can be averted is that it should become known and patent to all that those who bear the name of Christ are actively opposed to policies and practices of selfishness and injustice. If Christianity is to win the people of Asia and Africa it must be made clear to them that in the moral

**struggle ... the weight of Christian influence is on the side of right and that Christians are the fearless champions of justice, fair dealing and human brotherhood. If mission bodies fail to enter their protest where it is needed against the unchristian elements in western nationalism, their Christian witness is to that extent impaired. We cannot preach convincingly in word what we deny in national act and policy. In the ultimate mutual relations of different peoples in our complex modern world the range of mission duty has expanded until it includes not only the winning of individual souls but the endeavour to Christianize the national policies of the professedly Christian nations, and the former part of this task will be handicapped if the latter is ignored.**

**Obviously, the nationalist voices overheard in Chapter Six were coming through.**

**All of this does not mean that colonialism was now to be rejected outright. The trustee principle had come in vogue through the League of Nations. The West was seen to have a responsibility for the development of the colonies. The need was thus for selective protest, not wholesale condemnation. Oldham asserted that there were "ideal elements with which Christian missions can heartily cooperate."**

**Selective opposition implies also selective cooperation. At Jerusalem, there was great interest, for example, in cooperating with colonial regimes in education. The Conference stated that "we desire to cooperate in the fullest measure with them in the performance of this task."**

**The Conference did not leave it with complaints only. It was realized that professional missionary understanding of such politico-economic**

problems was at a low ebb. The first step needed was to research the hard facts. This was to be followed by educating the constituency and gaining their support. The third step was to formulate and advocate better policies. Such an ambitious programme would require coordination and this was provided for by the establishment of a Bureau of Social and Economic Research and Information (Boer, 238-245).

### *The Madras Decade, 1938*

The IMC held another major conference in 1938 at Madras. Whereas the one at Jerusalem was under the influence of the social gospel, this one experienced the sway of Barthianism. It will be interesting to see, therefore, how another school of thought reacted to colonialism and missionary participation in it. It was the Dutchman Hendrik Kraemer who was mainly responsible for this Barthian input. Thus, before we investigate the discussion at Madras, we will summarize the main insights of Kraemer.

#### *1. Hendrik Kraemer*

It is significant to note that in spite of his theological aversion to the social gospel, Kraemer largely endorsed the views expressed at Jerusalem as they pertain to our topic. He did not condemn colonialism outright, but he recognized a Western task to help colonized peoples to grow towards self-government based on their own nature and towards self-expression.

Kraemer had more than one reason for advocating missionary interest in colonial questions. First, there was the force of facts. Awakening peoples observed closely the stance of missions and measured mission response by Christian norms. Something was expected from missions precisely *because* they were missions. Nationalist bitterness was an obstacle to the spread of the Gospel. Secondly, the scope of the Gospel itself demanded concern for such crucial issues. To the claim that Christ did not engage in such affairs, he responded that Christ had come for a deeper work, i.e., to lay the foundation for new human relations. Paul's refraining from involvement in similar concerns was attributed to his sense of an imminent return of Christ. Almost impatiently Kraemer brushed aside such objections by pointing out that it was undeniable that the spirit of Christ aims at new creatures that would not simply leave whole areas of human endeavour to human autonomy or even to satan.

Kraemer detected two reasons missions avoided such issues, only one of which we will summarize here. It was that missions were too other-worldly. This fact was responsible for their becoming victims unconsciously to the spirit of modernity in the negative sense. He posited a most painful and difficult conflict between Christianity and modernity in the area of trade and industry. He employed the strongest terms to describe those aspects of modern culture that constitute the central moments in colonialism. They had developed autonomously, apart from the laws of God. This autonomous concentration of profits and production had ended up in antinomies and anomy. Demonic powers had revealed themselves in this area of Western culture. Missionary silence on these problems could only be

based on an ill-conceived piety that in effect denied what it intended to promote, namely, Christ as Light and Life of the world.

Our missiologist insisted on mission involvement not on basis of high hopes that missions would be able to change the situation drastically or because he expected an increase in missionary popularity. The basic reason was that of obedience to the Gospel, come what may. Kraemer wanted missions to become more prophetic. Old Testament-type prophecy was demanded to counteract the demonic in autonomous commerce and industry, but also to be directed to nationalism. Of course, this prophetic spirit was not to replace practical competence, but neither should the latter be allowed to suppress the former. Too often fear that the prophetic would disregard the practical has guided the church, but in fact the opposite has more commonly occurred, an example of which was that Christians were frequently closer to Manchester liberalism than to classic Christianity (Boer, 246-252).

## *2. The Madras Conference*

By 1938, the spirit in the ecumenical missionary community had become very despondent. The one-word description earlier reserved especially for Africa now applied to the entire world, including the West: darkness. With World War II imminent, men were said to be “overwhelmed by a sense of utter impotence and despair.” There was an increased emphasis at Madras on the church and evangelism, but this did not cause an unhealthy reaction away from colonial concern. The consensus did not differ greatly from that at Jerusalem. There was talk of “the great betrayal when – for all the leading of God –

imperialism was uncontrolled and economics ran riot.” The conference recognized the “inequality of economic opportunity open to various nations which gives to some a privileged position in access to the world’s raw materials, financial assistance and open areas which is denied to others.” Colonial raw materials were exported, processed abroad and returned for substantial profits. Mission and colonialism were now seen by some as opposites. The latter sprang from selfish motives, while mission was an expression of indebtedness to God for His gift of Christ. The “true missionary comes as a friend, not as a ruler or exploiter ... as brothers, not as rivals or enemies ...”

The conference recognized that individual conversion and social change belong together and should not be pitted against each other. It rightly rejected the evangelical argument that social change will automatically follow individual conversion as “a half truth.” The other side of the coin was also seen as true, namely that social change does not necessarily produce individual conversion. The church has a task that must avoid all false dualism between the personal and the social.

The church came in for some harsh criticism. One speaker lamented that the history of the Western church has been but “the missing of the opportunity.” Another burst out, “How often have concern for its own material interest, and too close connection with the State or with the existing social order, reduced the Church to cowardly silence or rendered her testimony suspect ...!” It was suggested that this failure “has been due in part at least to the fact that we ... have not sufficiently sought the mind of Christ ... and its implications, and so our most sincere and earnest attempts to solve it have often led us astray.”

Like Jerusalem, Madras also opted for a selective approach. Basically, missions were to be loyal to colonial governments and cooperate with them, especially in education. However, this was to be an independent loyalty that would assist, guide and cooperate where desirable, but which would also be prepared to “fearlessly criticize the State when the latter contravenes principles of justice and righteousness.”

A wide range of proposals for action were offered to the churches to rectify the evils created by colonialism, mostly non-political in nature. Since the church had been blind to the problems, it was suggested that “comprehensive and penetrating studies” be made of evangelism in such contexts. The church ought to educate Christians as to the truth of world economy and stir them “to a more sensitive conscience ...” It must “seek to open the eyes of its members to their implications in unchristian practices.” Missionaries were said to need a “sensitive appreciation and understanding of the changing currents of political, economic, social and religious life” as well as “the capacity to understand and appreciate the aspirations of other people.” The church, furthermore, must cease treating symptoms by works of charity, but she must reconstruct the politico-economic order so that resources benefit all men and “cooperation replaces competition.”

There was greater openness at Madras to ecclesiastical involvement in politics. In the past, Christians organized for “political action for such causes as temperance, Sunday observance ...,” so why deny the right to apply the principle to other social concerns? It was not that the church should identify herself with one party, but she should stimulate the members “to make a right use of political machinery for the welfare of those who suffer from oppression ...” (Boer, 252-259).

### *The Closing Years*

The post-Madras era was marked, of course, by World War II, a period during which little or no open ecumenical activity took place, certainly no international mission conferences. Missionary criticism of colonialism, however, continued to some extent in the pages of the *International Review of Missions*. Between 1945 and the time of Nigerian independence, three IMC conferences were held, but the official reports are surprisingly scant in their direct comments, though they contain many implications relating to colonialism. The Willingen conference pointed to “great inequality of standards of living in different parts of the world” as a problem. The Ghana assembly included the speech of Nkrumah in its report. He explained that “Africans ... have the crumbs of civilization falling from the rich tables of the western world.” Stephen Neill reminded the Whitby conference that “even systems which have started out as beneficent gradually change their character and become the instruments of self-seeking and arrogance” – as if colonialism had not been that all along (Boer, 347-348).

Much more source material is found in the writings of individual missiologists and missionaries. But since much of it, both favourable and critical, was repetitious of sentiments reported earlier, there is no need to repeat it.

### *Nationalism*

As to nationalism, all three conferences were marked by a strong awareness of it, but, again, it was not discussed at length. Here too

the most significant comments are found in articles and books produced by individuals, and the harvest is considerable. The following sample is typical of the era.

The entire colonial world was described as “seething with unrest, discontent, and thirst for self-determination and complete freedom, and this will never cease until these objectives are achieved.” Among Africans a “growing impatience” was detected, a “growth of economic, social and political aspirations and unrest” was reflected throughout the continent in the local press. Throughout the world, British and American policies were under attack and it was “widely held” that the British empire was about to collapse. By 1957, it was recognized that “every African almost without exception, is interested in politics today. Indeed this is an understatement. Many of them are passionately interested and even absorbed. Every African is in some sense a nationalist.” At the beginning of the period, attention was riveted on Asia, but Africa gradually received more of it until the continent was recognized as reflecting the revolutionary situation “more clearly” and “with more startling violence” than any other. British West Africa was regarded as the area in which “the rising tide of political self-consciousness” could be seen in its “most advanced and organized form.” The new element in this paragraph is not the prevalence of nationalism, for that we have uncovered earlier, but it lies in the keen awareness of this movement amongst the missionary community.

The nationalist movement was not always judged positively. Among the usual charges were that it was bitter, irrational, emotional, irresponsible and sensational. Bingle, editor of the evangelical magazine *World Dominion*, even referred to it as “an upsurge from

unconscious depths of demonic forces.” It did not recognize the “notable services” imperialism rendered and offered “very little constructive organization to replace what is destroyed.” He even implied insanity! Some charged that it was exploited by the local elite who used the movement to divert the attention of their people from elitist exploitation and collaboration to the activities of colonizers. Still others emphasized that Communism was utilizing the movement.

Authors were painfully aware of nationalistic resentment towards missions. Some regarded nationalism as the great obstacle to their work. There was a strong feeling that many nationalistic Christians derived their inspiration from non-Christian sources, though the opposite was also said to be true. The practices of such organizations as Azikiwe’s National Church and of its Kenyan counterpart, the Mau Mau, did not help to endear the movement to missionaries. The Mau Mau especially received much and consistently harsh treatment. The focus was almost invariably on the negative symptoms rather than on the underlying causes (Boer, 352-356).

Some authors recognized not only the negative facets of nationalism but they sought to explain them. Max Warren, author and long-term General Secretary of the CMS, saw nationalism as a legitimate protest against an attempt to impose a uniform and universal culture upon colonial peoples. Nationalism, he wrote, was more negative than positive; it was more clear about the past and present than about the future. He warned that local peoples would not and could not separate missionaries from colonial oppressors.

J.A. Verdoorn, a Dutch missionary to Indonesia, wrote a small book about these issues that was equal in clarity and sharpness to that of

Warren and David N. Paton whom you will meet in a few pages. He emphasized that the first demand of nationalists was freedom – and everything else would have to wait, even the question “what next?” It was by nature antithetical and tragic, for it was incapable of constructive work until its first demand had been met. Even the best colonial policies were rejected inevitably. Nationalism was a disease. This idea Verdoorn picked up from India’s Nehru who complained that nationalism is a terrible curse forced upon conquered nations. It demands “destruction, agitation and non-cooperation,” all negative activities, instead of “solid, positive, constructive work” (Boer, 357-361). Here were two authors, and they were not alone, who analyzed the reasons for the negative force of nationalism and thus prepared the way for at least the possibility of a rational and professional missionary approach to the movement.

How did missiologists of the day evaluate missionary or Christian performance in the politico-economic sphere? The Whitby report emphasizes the revolutionary nature of the Gospel. The generally moderate Stephen Neill, a Scottish Anglican missionary Bishop and author, posited that “revolution was a constituent mark of Christianity without which it ceases to be.” He also noted that the modern church was not living up to the revolutionary spirit of the Gospel and had generally become blinded to the fate of the poor. There was a general complaint that the church had not discerned the spirit of the times and had therefore not been able to respond properly to the winds of change. Missionaries lacked political and economic sense, one reads repeatedly. This lack prevented them from properly equipping African Christians for their political task. Warren wrote, “At a time when Africans are becoming more and more

politically conscious, this represents a major failure” that will reduce “witness to the sovereignty of God to the level of a cliché which bears no marks of relevance” in Africa (Boer, 361-363).

Kraemer especially wrote pungent criticism of missionary performance in this sphere. Under the spell of the spirit of modernity, churches had in practice forsaken their prophetic tasks over against contemporary culture, even though some continued to pay theological lip service to this function. Anglo-Saxon missions, according to Kraemer, retained a deeper social concern than most others, but theirs was not Biblically based; it was rather an expression of individualistic idealism. Given the Oriental wholistic mentality and the colonial context, the association of missions with imperialism in the nationalist mind was inescapable. However missions thus landed in an ambiguity of which they were largely unaware. Kraemer commented:

The only blame one can and must lay on Missions, looking back on the whole story, is that only rarely were they adequately aware of the obscuring of their character, and often met a world, steeped in the Eastern atmosphere and invaded by the West, with Western arguments. Arguments which might ease one's own conscience, but were not a real answer to the situation.

The most glaring example of obscuring and obtuseness to it has been the way in which ... Missions ... penetrated into China in the wake of Western mercantile penetration, surrounded by the glamour of such shameful wars as the Opium and other Wars, in which a proud people ... was humbled to the dust. The fact in

itself of penetrating into China, when it “opened,” is plausible, but the lack of scruples and the blindness to the ambiguity and its dangers into which one blundered is the sore spot, which cannot be effaced by the equally undeniable fact that it was done impetuously, from ardent apostolic zeal. Ardent as this zeal was, it was not coupled with wisdom and understanding ....

The proof of this is that the extra-territorial rights and privileges wrung from a reluctant and humiliated Chinese government ... were kept and required as a right due to a Westerner by the missionary body as well, instead of repudiating these rights for themselves.

Missionary Boards ... and missionaries themselves were not awake to the ambiguities and the obscuring of the true character of Missions in which they became involved by this identification ... with Western political power. No amount of apostolic zeal can excuse or justify this lack of depth in truly Christian spiritual strategy. What could the Chinese at large do in answer to it other than identify Missions with political dominance by the West? It is not only due to China’s semi-political dependence that missionaries and Chinese Christians were singled out by the Boxer fury against the “foreign devils” and that in China the term “running dogs of capitalism” was invented for the missionaries in the 1920s.

Kraemer wished to be fair to his colleagues. Speaking of the cultural pride missionaries shared with their compatriots, he called it “arrogance to condemn it out of hand because we happen to live at a time when the West ... is passing through a vociferous period of self-

depreciation.” However, “one cannot be content to judge them exclusively on the basis of a historical situation.” Missionaries “are called to bring all things ... into the light of a higher authority ... before which relative historical judgements do not lose all value but find their appropriate, i.e. subordinate, place” (Boer, 364-365).

Kraemer was by no means the only one to recognize the prophecy inherent in the Chinese situation. Even though China had never been formally colonized, the country was squarely within the orbit of Western economic power. It was that situation that enabled missionaries to penetrate far into China’s interior. When Communists took over, missions were expelled. A number of writers recognized that such expulsions could easily take place in Africa and elsewhere in the near future – as it did, though not in Nigeria.

The question of missionary failure with respect to China was vigorously debated in the literature. David Paton, for one, rejected a balanced approach to this question. It is natural, he suggested for Christians to defend themselves by admitting that, “of course, we have our failings, but we insist that much of our work stands and has been blessed by God.” Such an attitude constitutes “the prime obstacle to the Gospel.” Confession is not the time to make excuses. The need of the hour was “no temporizing and face-saving, or even balanced and fair-minded, appreciations of our strengths and weaknesses, but thorough-going repentance. The former attitude would “cut the nerve of reforming action.” Scholarly objectivity would not do; Amos-like prophecy was now required, for parallel situations were latent throughout Asia and Africa.

Paton judged that missions suffered from a prevailing blindness to their political role. While they thought of themselves as basically non-political, the Chinese regarded them as the very embodiment of Western politics, which, in fact, they were. The most blatant example of this was missionary use of treaty privileges imposed upon an unwilling China. Missionaries failed to understand nationalist and communist grievances as well as local politics. They did not even understand the politics of their own countries and thus readily became easy tools of imperialism and capitalism. In short, mission policy had been far too little directed by fundamental theological thinking. That, in turn, led to failure in politics and economics (Boer, 343-346).

What was the reason for the failure of missionaries in the politico-economic sphere? Critics of the day remind one of their counterparts of the nineteenth century as well as of the 1920s. A popular theme was that it was caused by a pietistic and dualistic reduction of the Gospel. Walter Freytag repeated the classic charge that many missionaries had “a conception of the Kingdom of God which was narrowed down to a purely spiritual and individualist outlook....” Verdoorn also singled out Pietism and Methodism with their ascetic strains as main causes for a limited vision and for a false neutrality. These components of missionary mentality prevented a clear understanding of the missionary problem inherent in the colonialist-nationalist struggle. Such Pietism, Verdoorn charged, is nothing short of a denial of the witness of Christ, for this witness must very much concern itself with the world’s problems. Pietism was accompanied by a combination of individualism and middle-class bourgeois ideology. Class interest stifled all prophecy and prevented Christian obedience.

Our writers did not fail to propose ways in which such mistakes could be prevented in the future. There was strong insistence on proper missionary training. Such training should include a study of socio-economic concerns and of revolutionary movements. Warren urged an examination of assumptions regarding the nature of politics, especially the question of political neutrality. Failure to do so will cause missionaries to become estranged from the main stream of the life of the country. It was pronounced foolish to think that a missionary can be non-political. Involvement is unavoidable. This involvement, however, was to be in terms of a third force that would reject both Capitalism and Communism. Since the latter feeds on injustice, Christians must struggle for a justice that is as revolutionary as the Gospel itself and more so than is Communism. The church must adopt a prophetic stance with respect to colonialism and freely subject it to Biblical criticism. It was recognized that not every missionary could become a political scientist or economist, but missionary organizations should have such specialists who could guide them in their policies.

Kraemer continually advanced the thesis that missions were members of the colonial team and that they should take their responsibility as team members seriously. Should missions not be invited to participate in official discussions on the subject, then they should invite themselves! The need of the hour was a conscious theological-missionary statement of the place and task of missions in the midst of current turmoil. He predicted in 1948 that Africa was to be the next continent where the colonial problems would become acute and it was thus imperative for mission and church to address themselves to the problems and to act upon them.

Nationalism would not die with independence, predicted Kraemer, but it would merely take on a different form. Missions were to help in nation building as servants, and by deed rather than preaching. They were to rid themselves of all categories of optimism, pessimism and idealism, but to simply act in obedience to God. Missions were to proclaim the will of God for the nations. This meant that they must help the local church with all the wisdom from God to arrive at a Biblical understanding of nationalism as well as a concrete and principial position vis-à-vis nationalism. This had not been done so far (Boer, 362-366, 376-377).

Verdoorn considered it a very important task for missions to be providing their home constituencies with colonial information. Traditional missionary information services required radical revision, for they had been geared to a bourgeois mentality and were “overly spiritual.” Information should cover all phases of colonial life and should be ecumenical in nature. Revisions were also due in missionary training. Programmes that excluded colonial questions were obsolete, for such questions were particularly important for the missionary’s relationship to the host country and they would partially determine mission methods. This aspect would be necessary even after independence, for the issues would continue to have significant influence.

The relationship of missions to nationalism was to be one of open support and encouragement without identification. In this, Verdoorn’s suggestions were identical to those of Kraemer. This support was to be given for a missionary reason, namely the need for self-expression of a nation. Missions must rejoice in all that encourages a people in their moral, political and social development.

It was to be open support, because silence would be understood as support for colonialism. Verdoorn based this on an analysis of the current situation in which the missionary atmosphere was very precarious, for it no longer allowed free and unencumbered intercourse with the local people, a situation that prevented missions from communicating. Missions should not react against their former mistake of identification with colonialism by now identifying with nationalism. They were to exercise exclusive obedience to their Lord and that precluded identification with any one-sided movement. The inherent tendency of nationalism to absolutize must be opposed, for this could easily degenerate into a totalitarianism unacceptable to the church. Nevertheless, the local Christians must be encouraged to participate in the movement.

The corollary to such a positive attitude towards nationalism was a more negative one towards colonialism. Colonial interests, according to Verdoorn, were contrary to mission interests, for the former thrive on a weak population. The time had come for missions to principally reject Indonesia's colonial status; the colonial system as such must now be renounced. Such a call should constitute a "spiritual liberation" from missionary ties to colonialism and from false bourgeois-Christian ideology. It must be a radical renunciation that would involve, e.g. refusal to accept from the colonial government compensation for any services rendered. Indonesians were questioning the legitimacy of such subsidy with increasing vigor, though the positive social benefits had so far prevented outright condemnation. Such subsidy inevitably introduced a murky moment in mission-government relations that militated against the mission's

ability to determine a “clear and unencumbered position, even though its cessation would not likely end all suspicion.”

Verdoorn realized that his stand was sure to cause opposition from various quarters, but the missions should face such fearlessly, even if it were to result in charges of either being revolutionary or defeatist, whether from Christian or non-Christian bourgeois groups. He quoted Barth, who asserted that a church so concerned with her reputation that it avoids expressing herself publicly is the best of all of the opposition.

The entire colonial question had become an exceptionally burning issue for missions and must therefore be treated officially and collectively. Indonesians desired such an official collective statement more than the utterances of individual missionaries. Verdoorn therefore suggested the creation of an organ for that purpose that would study the issues from a strictly missionary viewpoint (Boer, 377-380).

In conclusion, it will have been noted that the early thinking of the SUM coincided with ecumenical thought of the early part of the twentieth century. However, there was a parting of the ways. By the time the IMC held their 1928 conference the difference in opinion with respect to colonialism had become clear. Ecumenical thought was very much aware of nationalist sensitivities and much more sympathetic, though great care was taken not simply to accept nationalist categories uncritically. There was a strong consensus that the problems of colonialism were not simply individual aberrations, but were inherent in a system that gave priority to profits. There was a strong insistence that missionaries and colonial interests were at

**odds with each other. But missions, including the SUM, learned no more from ecumenical thinking than they did from nationalism.**

## Chapter 8

### Analysis and Evaluation

It may be useful at this point to summarize briefly the main points discussed so far. Having done that, we will seek to identify the principal cause(s) of the direction things have taken as well as the results in Nigeria. Throughout, we must keep in mind that the SUM is very typical of Evangelical missions both with respect to their strengths as well as their weaknesses, also in their approach to colonialism.

(1) We have noted the socio-economic stance of the British Evangelical community during the nineteenth century. It participated wholeheartedly in the capitalistic order of the day and gave little thought to its underlying philosophy. The community climbed up the socio-economic ladder so that by 1870 it had become very influential in the ecclesiastical, economic and political spheres.

(2) Evangelicals were neither blind nor indifferent to the social problems that emerged from the capitalistic order. In fact, they spent an amazing amount of creativity, energy and resources in seeking to alleviate the main problems – or symptoms. Their approach tended to be ameliorative rather than structural, and strongly individualistic. They failed to realize that the suffering they sought to alleviate was caused largely by the same order they helped construct. So they aided the victims of their own structural violence.

**(3) The Evangelical approach did not go unchallenged. Throughout the nineteenth century there was a considerable array of criticism leveled against them. Accusations of superficiality and dualism were raised. The need for reforming social and economic structures was often called for. The moralism with which Evangelicals went about doing good was condemned. This criticism did not all arise out of non-Christian quarters by any means. It was an Anglican clergyman who suggested that religion was used as opiate for the people. However, all of this made little impact on Evangelicals.**

**(4) The Gospel and the capitalist order were exported simultaneously, especially in West Africa. This is no cause for surprise when it is remembered that missionaries came from the class that had profited from that order at home. They fully expected colonized peoples to profit similarly from its transplant. Thus they supported colonialism enthusiastically and without embarrassment. In fact, this support was used as a prominent promotion pitch. They expected that colonialism would usher in full-scale liberation: economical, political, cultural, social and spiritual. They were blind to the fact that they were helping to replace an indigenous form of oppression with a capitalistic one. Since they failed to keep a professional eye on economic developments in the colonies, they did not recognize that slowly the economies of the colonies were bent in favour of the colonizers. When "independence" finally came, missionaries hardly realized that the colonial goal had basically been achieved, namely to secure a reliable source of raw materials and a market for manufactured goods.**

**(5) This does not mean missionaries had no criticism at all of colonialism, but they regarded their criticism as aimed not at**

colonialism itself – for that was basically seen as a liberation movement – but at corruptions of colonialism. They were critical of two types of colonial phenomena. The first was the attempt of colonial governments to restrict mission work in Muslim areas, but this problem was not related in the missionary thinking to the true nature of colonialism, at least not by the SUM. The attempt was regarded as a betrayal of true colonialism. The second type of criticism was directed at practices that were *obviously* immoral such as the trade in cheap gin and forced labour. They fit in the same class with the *obvious* immorality of the slave trade against which Wilberforce and others fought. These practices were also seen as degenerations from true colonialism; they were not recognized as expressions of its true nature.

(6) As Evangelicals at home were criticized by a long tradition of Christian social critics, so there were two lines of critics that sought to goad the missionary movement into different directions, but basically with little success. We refer to nationalism and the IMC community. The latter were basically ignored because missionaries found it more convenient to pay attention to its negative tendencies. All three traditions of critics had in common that they charged Evangelicals and their missionaries with dualism. It is the presence and nature of this dualism that we now wish to investigate further.

### *Dualism*

Dualism can take many forms, but there is one type that has historically been shared by both Roman Catholics and most brands of Protestantism, especially Lutheranism and Evangelicalism. It would

not be in keeping with the purpose of this book to explain its philosophic-theological background (Boer, 449-452). Hans Rookmaker, the famous Dutch philosopher of Art, has provided a clear description of the kind of dualism we have in mind. Basic to it is the view that

**this world is good, but yet has autonomy of its own. The world of faith, of grace, of religion is the higher one, a world for which we have need of God's revelation. This is where our aims and affections should be set. But the lower world, the world of men, the world of "nature," can be understood by reason, and here in fact reason reigns. It is as such non-religious, secular. Here there is no difference between the Christian and the non-Christian, as both act according to the same natural laws of thought and action.**

**Diagrammatically, the scheme would look like this:**

sacred / higher / grace / divine revelation / spiritual / soul / theology / church

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secular / lower / nature / autonomous reason / material / body / philosophy / world

**Reuben Alves put it this way:**

**Traditional ecclesiastical languages have their ultimate concern in eternity, God, and salvation of the soul. Their relation to the world, to life, to history, when it is not negative is purely tangential. Or it puts the world and life in an inferior hierarchical rank: natural/supernatural; the secular world/the religious world; the material/the spiritual; the temporal/the eternal.**

Tawney describes dualism as relating the religious and secular as “parallel and independent provinces, governed by different laws, judged by different standards, and amenable to different authorities.” It is based on “an attitude which forms so fundamental a part of modern thought, that ... its precarious philosophical basis ... (is) commonly forgotten.”

This is the dualism that has led to a popular mentality among Christians that would seek to divorce their religious obligations from their artistic, scientific, political and economic activities. Rookmaker warns that when Christians – even devout ones – separate these concerns from their religious life, they are unwittingly giving in to this long western philosophical tradition. They are really saying

That these realms of “worldly” pursuit, belonging to our human nature and not sinful as such, are just human, that is, apart, outside of the realm of grace, of God’s work and revelation. The only claim God has in this realm of human endeavour is in the field of ethics ...; the Christian must show his Christianity by avoiding immorality of any sort.

The well-known missiologist Herman Bavinck has identified this issue as a key factor in understanding serious divergences among Christians. He asserted that “all movements and schools which lay claim to the lives and minds of men” – and that certainly holds for missions – “can be described and judged according to the position which they take on *this* question ....” Furthermore, he singled out this dualism as the cause for the powerlessness of missions. The message of faith in Christ could become the foundation for a new integration in

dislocated cultures, but missionary work has been hampered by insufficient awareness

of the thoroughly dangerous character of our own one-sided technical culture, and we have also failed ... to come to a sufficiently clear and unified point of view, compatible with our Christian faith. Too frequently there is in our own heart an irreconcilable dichotomy between our faith in Jesus Christ and modern life and thought. In a much deeper sense than we ourselves are aware, we have become modern men .... Those whom we have reached often have sensed this poverty and deficiency in our lives more clearly than we ourselves. And from the very beginning they have felt the cleft in our lives .... Such poverty has rendered us ... weak in our struggle against ... secularization .... We have been overly naïve ... in our notion that we simply preach the gospel .... Too frequently we have failed to see that the education we give and our whole attitude toward life is to a strong degree propaganda for Western culture, with its extremely dangerous elements (*Introduction*, p. 107).

That the SUM shares this dualism is not merely a conclusion drawn from its general prevalence, but the mission's documents cannot be understood without reference to it. This dualism was never officially accepted or acknowledged and it was never more than an unconscious element in the spiritual composition of the staff. When attention is drawn to it, it is often denied, but its existence and practical application are almost shouted from the housetops in the sources. It is the only explanation for the mission's narrow view of Christian education that did not go much beyond evangelism and personal morals, while otherwise secular government textbooks were

acceptable. To be sure, such a policy was partly imposed by the government who gave grants for the so-called neutral subjects only. The idea of basic religious neutrality of so-called non-religious subjects was adhered to by both agencies. Schools ought to embrace “both religion and education,” Farrant suggested, a case where the conjunction really constitutes a disjunction. Discussing the need for Christian testimony at the new University of Ibadan, Farrant could not conceive of this being embedded in the actual approach of Christian lecturers to their subject matter. Its primary focus was to be a theological faculty; in other words, a separate and more narrowly “religious” faculty.

Medical work was frequently discussed as “justifying itself as a definite spiritual opportunity,” for it served to create friendly attitudes, thus “giving an opportunity of introducing the Gospel.” Upon this interpretation, Maxwell reported, “all agreed.” According to a medical missionary, medical work “is a means to an end, it breaks down prejudice, and wins the affection and confidence of the people more than any other agency,” a theme occurring repeatedly. Sometimes medical work and evangelism were described as “dual” ministries between which tension would arise occasionally. Dualism prevented the mission from arriving at a well-defined and theologically-grounded view of the relationship between evangelism and social ministries. The latter were basically seen as a means to the greater end of evangelism.

Our emphasis has been on British Evangelicals. It is useful to remember, however, that the same influence with much the same result can be found among American Christians, those who have taken over the lead in missions from Britain. A succinct and well-

documented study of it is sociologist David Moberg's *The Great Reversal*. He points out the existence of dichotomies in that community and draws attention to the fatal naiveté it has caused with respect to social issues, to its inherent escapism and lack of realism. All the social shortcomings attributed to nineteenth-century British Evangelicals by dissenting prophets, to twentieth-century missions by the IMC, are ascribed with a barrage of examples to contemporary American Evangelicals by Moberg. Similarly, William Stringfellow, an American Anglican theologian and social critic, attests to the prevalence of a dualistic mentality among his Christian compatriots.

The SUM's continued approval of the economic order developing in Nigeria is only explicable in terms of their dualism that was the basic factor preventing them from measuring colonial structures by Biblical standards. Dualism drove the mission to spend all its energies, resources and deep devotion on evangelism in the narrow sense of the word or on social projects that would serve as bait for the former. Dualism deprived her of the stimulus to think analytically of so-called "legitimate commerce," a doctrine clearly the product of syncretistic thinking that combined the Gospel with autonomous economics. The mission supported it on basis of superficial observations and failed to take seriously the constant criticism from nationalist and ecumenical quarters. She was so busy with "sacred" matters that she lacked the inclination to bother herself with responsible analysis of developments in the "secular" realm, too busy not primarily because of lack of time, but because of this hierarchical dualism that relegates matters such as economics to the inferior rank of "natural." Paul Abrecht, an American social ethicist and director of the World Council

of Churches' science project, explains that missions did not have a general theory of economic development because economic activities were always secondary to evangelism as a supportive function. Dualism has seen to it that, instead of voicing prophetic protest, missions copped out in ostrich fashion with respect to the socio-economic teachings of the Gospel. These teachings were regarded at best as mere implications, not as constituents of the primary message.

*Tawney's Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* is a most enlightening analysis of the historical development of Christian dualism in economics. Though many Christians dismiss "the concern of churches with economic relations and social organization as a modern innovation," he concludes that it is this *lack* of concern that is novel. "What requires explanation is not the view that these matters are part of the province of religion, but the view that they are not." Beginning with the Middle Ages, he shows that "religion has been converted from the keystone which holds together the social edifice into one department within it, and the idea of a rule of right is replaced by economic expediency as the arbiter of policy and the criterion of conduct." "The conflict between religion and those natural economic ambitions" has been solved

by a truce which divides the life of mankind between them. The former takes as its province the individual soul, the latter the intercourse of man with his fellows in the activities of business.... Provided that each keeps to its own territory, peace is assured. They cannot collide, for they never meet (Tawney, 278-286).

Dualism also prevented principial political thinking. Previous chapters are ringing testimony to the deep political involvement of missions, including the SUM, in imperial concerns. Neill's *Missions and Colonialism* is a powerful witness as well. Missionaries encouraged colonialism as they understood it in every conceivable way. They consciously saw themselves as part of the colonial team, they boasted openly and in print that they were more effective in subduing – “liberating” – peoples than were armies. They participated in negotiating treaties. The list could continue, but all the while missionaries claimed with a straight face not to be involved in politics! In fact, they were generally forbidden such involvement by the very board who instructed them to teach submission to the people! This was not hypocrisy; it was dualistic blindness.

There were certain conscious exceptions to the rule of no political involvement. The community crusaded for certain limited issues, namely the liquor trade, the forced labour problem, exploitation in the Belgian Congo and the question of religious freedom. This involvement is a credit to missions and indicates that, when they *recognized* a problem, they were not afraid of facing government. Involvement in these issues was, however, typical of the traditional approach that regarded the basic structures sound, while negative developments expressive of the deepest nature of colonialism were interpreted as immoral aberrations of the real thing.

An additional form of political participation was the common practice of consultation with government behind the scenes, especially in educational matters. Government educational commissions often had a high proportion of missionary members. Behind the scenes, it is known, missionaries would often be critical of government policies,

but since these received no public airing, such criticism did nothing to enhance the credibility of missions among nationalist.

Of course, a policy of non-involvement based on dualism results only in self-delusion, for politics is inescapable. Neill's original study quotes many writers, all of whom agree that, though missions may have been sincere about their being non-political, in fact they were heavily involved. Moberg points out that political inaction constitutes action and that "no vote ... constitutes a 'no' vote." Neutrality, others write, is an illusion, a simple-minded assumption. Pretended neutrality meant missions supported the colonial *status quo*. It led missions to drift aimlessly with the "ebb and flow of circumstances" and to conformity "to the shape and tendencies of the present world age." Attempts to remain free from entanglement led straight to succumbment. The choice is not and was not between being politically involved or not, but between conscious and good politics on the one hand and unconscious and bad politics on the other.

The attitude we are describing prevented the mission from comprehending nationalism and its aspirations. It led to adjustment to the ideologies and interests of the colonizers. It rendered missionaries "good revolutionaries but blind ones." On the one hand missions would call for revolutionary justice and liberty; on the other hand, attempts to concretize these notions on the part of nationalists were usually feared and opposed. Missions preached, but they rejected the fruits of their preaching. The SUM and others became deeply involved and wrongly, *not in spite of but precisely because of* their official stand. P. Maury, author of *Evangelism and Politics* (1959), lamented, "How many have been turned away from ... Jesus Christ because the church ... spoke irresponsibly about politics, or kept

silent when they should have spoken?" John V. Taylor of CMS fame was surely right in pointing out that danger of this trend is even greater in Africa because of the church's unsympathetic attitude towards those with political inclinations.

Though it cannot be said that the SUM rejected politics as an avenue for Christian service, her political ineptness and consequent ambiguous stance prevented her from consciously equipping Nigerian Christians for their political task. In fact, politically-inclined members of the church assert that they met opposition from SUM missionaries for their political activities. Two relatively successful politicians, David Lot and Azi Nyako, testify of the opposition they encountered. The mission helped create social sensitivity through the Gospel, but it did not help Nigerians apply the Gospel (Boer, 453-460).

### *Evaluation of the SUM's Stance on Colonialism*

The SUM was in most respectable theological company in her insistence that colonialism was a movement directed by God in His providence. Lutheran Bishop J.L.De Vries shows little appreciation in his dissertation for German colonialism in Namibia, but he fully agrees that it remains under God's sovereignty. Though vehemently opposed to its laissez-faire basis, Abraham Kuyper saw colonialism willed by God. Warren regarded it as a "*preparation* for God's good will for the world." Even the Indian Christian ecumenical theologian, M.M. Thomas, saw colonialism as necessary to break up static social structures and to lay the basis for political unity, personal freedom and social development of Asians. He noted that Paul interpreted the

Roman government as “being for your good” and drew an analogy between that power and that of the British.

The problem appeared when the SUM jumped to conclusions from providence to divine approval of human motives and methods. It was within God’s design that Judas should betray Christ, but it remained an act of betrayal and will be judged as such. The same holds true for the brothers’ treatment of Joseph. More than once God used the Pagan nations in the Old Testament days to punish stubborn Israel, but these nations themselves attacked Israel for motives of their own and they were subsequently condemned by the prophets. It is obviously one thing to regard a movement as within divine providence, but quite another to then baptize it as if it were therefore largely acceptable as to human motives and methods. This distinction was picked up by the IMC, but the SUM folk ignored it. This failure was fatal in their evaluation of colonialism.

The notion of trusteeship has been prominent in all colonial discussions. Both the League of Nations and the United Nations Organization propagated it. Moderate nationalists and ecumenicals recognized its legitimacy. The SUM shared Lugard’s idea that the abundant natural resources of Africa should not be left idle, but that they should be harnessed for the benefit of all parties. The Biblical teachings about the cultural mandate, stewardship and of sharing all are in support of such a view. Where, for whatever reason, a local people do not have the technology necessary for this purpose, the Scripture encourages a pooling of gifts for the common good. Past and current discussions on the responsibility of the north for southern development have emphasized such a communal approach. We are told that nations, if they are to be true to God’s calling, must

cooperate in the search for fair use of resources. Sovereignty of the earth was given not to a few nations, but to all.

Groen Van Prinsterer, an influential Dutch Christian thinker, and his spiritual heir Abraham Kuyper accepted that colonialism had a genuine task to fulfill and both agreed that those seeking to carry it out were entitled to a reward as much as anyone else in the pursuit of their legitimate task. But they rejected the capitalist framework in which the colonial task was pursued. Groen Van Prinsterer saw liberalism as human revolt against divine authority, as an attempt to establish full humanistic autonomy. Colonies, as he rightly saw, had become the tools of speculators and capitalists. They were the football of liberals. These two men were joined by Mennonite missionary to Indonesia, Pieter Jansz (1820-1904), in recognizing the direct link between the prohibition to do missionary work among Muslims and the design of capitalists, an awareness of which the SUM showed no sign (Boer, 469-471).

### *Effects on the Nigerian Christian Community*

In view of the reviews of the original study on which this book is based, it appears necessary to continually repeat the fact that this investigation is not a complete history of the SUM, but it is concerned with only one aspect of the mission's work. We concentrate on certain faults because the effects of these particular faults go far in explaining some important problems in the Nigerian Christian community. As such, we insist that our intentions and goals are basically positive: to find healing and to equip the church as a whole

for a more positive and fully Christian style in our modern world so impressed with the place of economic behavior.

In spite of our emphasis on negative factors, we are fully aware of the positive results of the work of the SUM, so much so that we personally continue proudly to associate ourselves openly as a member of the SUM family, even though of a different branch. The mysterious nature of the sudden and persistent outpouring of spiritual energy of the missionary movement since 1800, its amazing spread through the world and its impressive victories, especially in Africa, are good reason for caution in any total evaluation of short and long-term effects. There is no Biblical doubt about the link between missions, in spite of their ambiguities, to the work of God, who motivates, guides and completes this effort and through whom it is related to that Kingdom of righteousness for which so many grope desperately. We insist with Kraemer that those who “find cause only for condemnation and scorn” are “blinded by an emotional inhibition.” Missions are much better than earlier pages seem to indicate because of the one-sided discussion. Missions have been an important redeeming factor in colonialism. The fact that they are not frequently so recognized is due not only to an emotional aversion to anything colonial, according to Kraemer, but also to the humanistic tradition of the West that is unwilling and unable to understand the Christian legacy with the same degree of sympathy and objectivity with which it has studied other cultures and religions.

Kraemer is correct in dubbing missions a redeeming factor with respect to colonialism. The fact of an almost universal church is itself a most positive achievement, for there is evidence that the Spirit is aiding the new churches to break through the limitations of mission

dualism. Black, yellow and liberation theologies all represent attempts to overcome these restrictions. Missions have helped undermine the pillars of stagnation and contributed by providing potential underpinnings for a new integration. Though missions have often been negative with respect to nationalism, the two movements are recognized by many as being on one continuum. Idowu, a Nigerian theologian with a hefty dose of nationalism in his soul, has called missionary Henry Venn the “father of African nationalism.” Much of this was unwittingly accomplished through mission schools that have graduated an amazingly high percentage of today’s African leaders. Missions softened the colonial blow by behind-the-scenes intervention with the government and in other ways we have already recounted. True, mission criticism was often within the colonial framework and behind the scenes. Yet, it cannot be denied that in Nigeria, missionaries “were vigorous critics on behalf of the African.” Abrecht observes that the churches’ contributions to social improvement, both direct and indirect, are not sufficiently realized. A single paragraph mentioning such contributions really does missions less than justice, but a book has its limits (Boer, 473-475).

*When one measures the results of mission work in terms of the ideology of liberation which the SUM itself espoused right up to independence, the results are more ambiguous. Colonialism withdrew and Africa appeared on the world stage – the dream in Kumm’s bosom. However, neo-colonialism was the new reality, a more subtle and “civilized” version of the pre-colonial situation with its chartered company. The liberal idea of liberation had caused traditional oppression to be replaced with a capitalistic version.*

**Not only did this economic liberation fail to materialize, but Christian missions and churches are, in various quarters, grouped among the oppressors. The evidence of earlier chapters is there and even more fully in the original study on which this book is based. One does not need to turn to the church's enemies for verification. A faithful son of the church who also commands the highest moral respect among African political leaders, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, repeatedly warns the church against its ties with forces of injustice. The following quote could just as well have emerged from the British situation of the nineteenth century:**

**For the representatives of the Church ... frequently act as if man's development is a personal and "internal" matter, which can be divorced from the society and the economy in which he ... earns his daily bread. They preach resignation; very often they appear to accept as immutable the social, economic, and political framework of the present-day world. They seek to ameliorate intolerable conditions through acts of love and kindness ... but when the victims of poverty and oppression begin to behave like men and try to change those conditions, the representatives of the Church stand aside.**

**The church, Nyerere continues, accepts people who help give shape to the present politico-economic structures and who seek to retain them, as long as they also attend church and give liberally – and this is especially true for the Nigerian church. The very system they support is the one that has contributed to the suffering of millions. If God were to ask the poor who their friends are, Nyerere doubts that Christians will be mentioned among them.**

In the Nigerian situation many poor *would* count Christians among their friends, but once the poor begin to gain a measure of self-awareness, it will be difficult to predict what their attitude towards the church will become. The African press frequently links missions with neo-colonialism. Though missionaries tend to dismiss such charges as mere emotional nationalism, the history of the case provides perfect justification for many of these charges.

The frequently negative attitude toward nationalism on the part of missions has driven potential leaders away from the church. Many African political leaders who have graduated from mission schools have only a tentative relationship with the church. Early warnings that the church must approach nationalists with greater understanding were ignored with the result that nationalists found little reason to associate with the church, even though missions inadvertently called their movement into being.

Neill suggests that this danger arose only when nationalists became suspicious of colonialism, but that previous to this new awareness no real harm could come of this association. In other words, it was merely a matter of wrong tactics! We insist that much more was involved than wrong tactics or failure to move with the times: it was a basic misunderstanding of the Gospel that led to an approach that was wrong from the beginning and that would have been wrong under all circumstances – and it was so criticized from the beginning.

Needless to say, missions were ill equipped to train Nigerian Christians for their political task. Johannes Verkuyl, a Reformed professor of missiology at the Free University in Amsterdam, points to the “politico-phobia” Christians have inherited from missions, though

there are signs that Christians in Nigeria are trying to shake loose from such restrictions. Many find the church incapable of the dynamic leadership required in times of rapid change. Taylor finds African Christians uncertain in their political stance. Warren declared that the church has done very little

to prepare Africans for an understanding of politics and the Christian's responsibility .... At a time when Africans are becoming more ... politically conscious, this represents a major failure .... It is at least arguable that failure at this point is going to negate much of the value of its achievements in the realm of *agape*, and may well reduce its witness to the sovereignty of God to the level of a *cliché* which bears no marks of relevance in those "tumultuous lists of life" down which the young African is going ..., but going, alas, without ... the guidance and blessing of God's priests (*Caesar*, 67).

David Lot, the Nigerian pastor who was more or less forced by his people to enter politics, confides that he found it difficult to discuss political issues with missionaries. To be sure, some SUM staff encouraged him, but that did not represent the mission's routine. The mission or missionaries never provided him with any literature to help him think about the relationship of politics to the Gospel. We recall the missionary opposition of which Nyako complained when he showed interest in politics. Had the mission appreciated more the importance of politics from a Kingdom perspective, it might have been more pro-active in aiding these men in developing a Christian approach, but such a task did not fit the vision of the SUM and their fellow travelers. Eugene Rubingh, a CRC missionary to Nigeria and author of *Sons of Tiv*, suggests a lack of integrated thinking among

missionaries. We suspect that this lack may be the reason for the negative reaction on the part of the Tiv Protestant church to politics. When politics threatened to become an alternate focus of loyalty among the ambitious, church leaders “warned against involvement in politics of any kind by affirming that Christians had nothing to do with such matters of the world but belonged instead to ‘the party of Jesus’.”

The ineptitude inherited from the missions came to the foreground especially during the *sharia* debate in 1977 and 1978. Nigeria was in the process of writing a new constitution. In this process no issue was debated with more heat and emotion than that of *sharia*. This issue was whether Muslim law should receive a place in the constitution alongside, parallel with and at a level equal to the secular Western system inherited from Britain. In this debate the *underlying issue was really the nature of religion*.

Muslims advanced a number of reasons for the inclusion of their law. For our purposes, the most important one was that Islam is a wholistic religion embracing all of life. Any attempt to limit its application to so-called “spiritual” or “private” realms amounts to suppressing Islam as a whole. It was argued that all aspects of life – law, education, government, economics – are inseparable from Islam. Especially sociologist Ahmed Beita Yusuf provided powerful arguments in this regard. He argued that Islam is wholistic. Therefore the positing of a neutral non-religious zone in life must result in oppression of its true genius. Limiting the application of Islam and, for that matter, of any religion, is in effect to replace these religions with secularism and atheism. For the government to refuse to finance, for example, religious education, whether Muslim or Christian,

constitutes “the advancement of secularism.” It “is next to condemning religious propagation ..., thus giving undue preference to secularism and atheism.” He emphasized that “the false principle of ... neutrality” encourages “a callous indifference to religious groups and ... interests. That would indeed amount to favouring those who believe in no religion ... over those who do believe.” This was the basic Muslim argument.

The arguments against the inclusion of the *sharia* were many, but most of them were based on a very narrow definition of religion and can directly be traced to the dualism we have been at pains to describe. It was said that religion should be kept out of the constitution because religion is in itself divisive – as if secularism were not a religion or set of beliefs and *therefore* not divisive! Religion is personal and must be kept in the private sphere. It should not be mixed with politics, for the latter is a public matter.

The alternative offered by Christians was couched in strongly dualistic terms. The overwhelming Christian consensus was for a secular constitution that would eliminate all religious influences. Laws based on religion have no place at the centre. No religion is to receive official patronage. So-called common law was advocated since it is secular and neutral and favours neither Muslim nor Christian. This solution was offered not only by marginal individuals, but also by synods and Christian conferences. The synod of the main Tiv Protestant church adopted a statement objecting to the inclusion of the *sharia* precisely *because it is a religious law*. A conference called by the Ibadan-based Institute of Church and Society (ICS) called for “the *ordinary* law of the land administered by the *ordinary* law courts” (italics mine).

These were not the only arguments against the *sharia*. Many Christians felt that the attempt to include it was a thinly-disguised form of the Muslim *jihād*, an attempt to make Nigeria a Muslim state. These fears were well founded. However, our point here is to indicate how Christians react in a national crisis – it did become a serious crisis threatening the unity of the nation – and we have seen it to be a dualistic reaction. Religion, both Christian and Muslim, was reduced to a private, personal, spiritual affair that tends to divide if allowed to influence national life. The solution must be sought beyond religion in an area where men have things in common, in a neutral zone where one can be objective and work together. There is an area of alleged common sense and that is where men of different religions can solve their public problems, for that area lies beyond religion and unites us.

No one found an alternative to this secular model. The Christian community simply did not possess a sufficiently wholistic view to produce an alternative that has its foundation in the Bible. We know of only two persons who even desired such an alternative and they were either opposed, as in the case of Ibrahim Usman Sangari, or ignored, as in the case of E.A. Adegbola. The best the Christian community could do was to counter the Muslim proposal with a pseudo-solution derived not from its own main resource, the Bible, but from Western non-Christian secular Humanism.

The humanistic pseudo-solution was to restrict religion to private categories while secular concepts were to form the basis of public life. However, in reality it is not a matter of subjective religion versus the common sense of an objective and neutral reason. It is a matter of one religion – Christianity – versus another set of religious values and beliefs that emphasize faith in the ability of autonomous man to find

his own solutions, but that will have little truck with Biblical notions of a reason impaired by sin. Secularism is not non-religion. It is another religion that, because of its subtlety and lack of liturgy, is no less a threat to the Christian community than is Islam. We thus find Christians resorting to the beliefs and practices of one rival religion in order to undercut the threat posed by another. In spite of all the wholistic forces surrounding the church that should encourage her to adopt a more wholistic approach – African Traditional Religion, Islam and the Bible – *it was the same dualism that caused missions to go astray in their support of capitalism and colonialism, that tragically triumphed.*

We have seen that during colonial days nationalists sought to utilize the concepts of the Gospel to fight the central battle as they saw it, namely that of undermining first the effects of capitalism and later, colonialism itself. However, they were ignored and opposed by missionaries. Succeeding generations of nationalists have as a result become increasingly indifferent, if not hostile, to the Gospel. That process continued after “independence.” The *sharia* debate shows how even Christian leaders in all earnestness sought to solve a national crisis with humanistic categories in the name of their own religion. It did not occur to them that perhaps there may be a Biblical solution. Those who did suggest a different direction either received no active support or were shouted down. The lesson has been well learned (Boer, 475-482).

### *The Question of Blame*

The question raised here is whether one can blame missions for being colonialist. It should first of all be repeated that missions represent their home constituencies and share their ideology to a large extent, though they often find themselves at the forefront of adjustments in these ideologies. Thus, the question must really be asked of the Western church in general.

The answer, furthermore, depends on one's definition of "colonialist." If by the term one means a person or group who consciously supports colonialism as Kraemer has described it, the answer is negative. Whatever the mistakes and misconceptions missions harboured, their support of colonialism was generally based on their hopes for mutual profit and whenever a clash of interests was detected, missionaries generally sought to resolve it in favour of the colonized people – as missionaries recognized it. Neill's formidable study is unshakable testimony to this fact. The "one thing that shines through all this tangled history is that the missionaries were actuated throughout by one consideration only – the welfare of the Africans whom they had come to serve." If, however, a colonialist is one who, for whatever reason and regardless of his degree of understanding, supports colonialism, then obviously the SUM and kindred organizations as well as their home constituencies were deeply colonialist.

Though we have established the colonialist nature of the SUM and other missions, we have not yet answered whether or not they can be blamed for this situation. Kraemer, Verdoorn, Warren and others agree that colonialism was in a sense inescapable. Neill points out repeatedly that missions seldom had a clear choice and where they did, it was often merely between one form of colonialism and

another, or between chaos and order. In that context does the question of blame make any sense?

One needs to return to the nineteenth century and beyond for an answer. Politico-economic developments were no accidents, but they arose out of a combination of man-made circumstances and philosophies. Decisions were made and choices between alternatives. It was these decisions, choices, many of them very small by themselves, that led to the situation we have described. All along the way prophets and others warned against these developments and demanded deeper reflection, but their cries fell on deaf ears. Even if the argument were advanced that the church did fall into the situation – which it definitely did not – the manner of her involvement would certainly have been very different if there had been clearer Biblical vision. The voice of prophecy was there, the voice of protest almost hoarse from repetition, but missions continued undisturbed along their *chosen* paths.

Missiologists and others have expressed their criticisms with various degrees of mildness. There is no need to repeat them all. It was generally agreed that missions took their task too lightly, without counting the cost. Lack of responsible reflection is another frequent charge. A.G. Honig, a Dutch theologian, rejects any contextual concerns, such as reaction against the social gospel, as insufficient excuse for the failure of the churches on this score. Without opting for any type of horizontalism, he refers to the traditional approach as a “terrible heresy.” Kraemer, of course, insists that Christians are never caught up by existential circumstances, but that the very Gospel they have been commissioned to spread contains clear teachings that

**should have moved the missionary community towards alternative directions (Boer, 482-484).**

## Chapter 9

### A Full-Gospel Alternative

In this final chapter we are going to suggest some alternatives to the type of mission we have described, alternatives that concern the church as a whole as much as its missionaries. So far, we have been dealing mostly with Evangelicals, but the suggestions we are about to offer hold equally for so-called “mainline” churches. Our relative silence about the World Council of Churches (WCC) must not be understood as if we were opting implicitly for its approach. If Evangelicals have been sidetracked, it can be argued that the WCC has as well, though in the opposite direction.

The reader is reminded once again that this study is not a history of the SUM. It concerns itself with one aspect of its history, the politico-economic sphere. This emphasis does not betray a lack of interest in so-called “primary evangelism,” but, rather, is an expression of the fact that evangelism without a solid politico-economic understanding and approach becomes distorted and irresponsible, especially so in a world where these questions have taken on such importance in the minds of men. The choice of our particular emphasis has led to what might appear a negative evaluation of the SUM as a whole. In view of criticisms to that effect of the original dissertation on which this book is based, it is necessary to repeat that had we engaged in a full-orbed history of the mission, the result would have looked much more positive. In spite of the very serious failure we have pointed out, we

have always had deep respect for the SUM. Her staff have given of themselves, emptied themselves, crucified themselves more than any other mission I know in Nigeria, both personally and collectively. Among all the missions associated with the SUM, the British Branch surely has been a pioneer in seeking genuine unity with the Church of Christ in Nigeria. At the same time, it is not honouring a mission if admiration for her would stifle criticism that is offered not for its own sake, but as a necessary prerequisite for a renewal that is both more Biblical and more in tune with the demands of the day.

It will be noticed that this chapter emphasizes North American situations more than British. This is no illogical switch, but one demanded by present circumstances. American influence is rapidly superseding that of the British, both negatively and positively, in missions as well as politics and economics.

Before we move into the meat of this chapter, I remind the reader that this book was originally published 30 years ago. It describes the situation as it was *then*. Though the time difference does not really affect Chapters 1-8, but it surely does this chapter. Before you proceed further, I wish here to pre-empt criticism that the situations I describe below have been overtaken and corrected.

That is partially true and to the extent it is true, I gratefully acknowledge this. Unfortunately, I do not have the opportunity to do fresh research to bring this chapter totally up to date. In general, two major changes have taken place since the original publication:

1. The Evangelical community has become aware of its traditional dualism and of the obstacles it has posed to the spread of the Gospel. There is still a strong residue in

practical thinking, but the principle of it has been recognized and publicly acknowledged. There is a search for and a push towards a more wholistic approach. I like to think that the contemporary Kuyperian movement, scattered as it is throughout the English-speaking Evangelical community, has made positive contributions towards that end.

2. The push for more socially responsible investment that is described below can boast considerable success. A whole movement for social responsibility has gained much ground among the churches and their members, while many business schools and corporations have established courses and departments to instill awareness along these lines. Even the general public has participated in putting pressure on corporations that are found to be involved in dubious situations of oppression.

Thus, though this chapter, in distinction from the others, used to represent the *status quo* back in 1984, it now also represents history. The problems I point out have not completely been resolved, but many are being worked on and are in the process of amelioration.

The *principles*, of course, remain valid and continue to present ideals, goals and challenges yet to be fully achieved. I gratefully recognize the progress that has been made and regret the lack of time for adequate research into the new *status quo*, one that I would describe as “on the way.” I do, however, include one example at the end of the appropriate section of a contemporary business ministry.

However, while the Evangelicals are trying to overcome their dualism in favour of a more wholistic approach and the social investment movement has gained in popularity and strength, we have in the meantime entered the era of technological, economic and political globalism that many of its critics lambast for increasing the gap between rich and poor throughout the world, including the West. Some denounce it as even more vicious than the colonial and neo-colonial eras. That topic is definitely beyond the scope of this book.

And now, back to earlier decades that the rest of this chapter addresses.

### *Theological Considerations*

In this section we will treat a number of theological themes, a correct understanding of which is necessary for a renewal of mission. It is our contention that the SUM and her sister Evangelical missions have at certain points woefully misunderstood the Bible and that their dramatic failure in the politico-economic sphere can be traced directly to this failure. The themes will basically constitute different aspects of the Biblical teaching of the Kingdom of God.

The first thing to be noted is the centrality of the Kingdom in the Bible. In much of the Christian church it is the ecclesiastical structures that are accorded priority of concern, but Herman Ridderbos, professor of New Testament at the Free University in Amsterdam, correctly points out that the central theme of Jesus' message was the full coming of the Kingdom. Repeatedly the New Testament summarizes the preaching of Christ and His messengers in terms of

the Kingdom. Time and again one comes across variations of this verse, “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17, 3:1-2; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 9:11, 60; Acts 1:3, 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23. Ridderbos, xi).

The second thing to be noted is the scope of this Kingdom. Evangelicals suffer from a strange ambivalence on this issue and have in practice frequently reduced its scope – in their own thinking, we hasten to add, for our theories can do nothing to reduce God’s Kingdom! Many either explicitly or implicitly restrict the Kingdom to affairs of the spirit and the church. If the Bible is clear about one thing, however, it is clear about the co-extension of the Kingdom with that of creation. When God created, He created His Kingdom, including both the material and the spiritual. It is a main theme in the Psalms. “For God is the king of all the earth .... God reigns over the nations” (Psalms 47:7-8). “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all” (Psalms 103:19). See also 23:1-2, 33:6-9, 50:1, 10-12, 89:9-12). The following are among David’s final words:

To you, O God, belong the greatness and the might, the glory, the victory, the majesty, the splendor; Yes! Everything in heaven, everything on earth; the kingdom all yours! You’ve raised yourself high over all. Riches and glory come from you, you’re ruler over all; You hold strength and power in the palm of your hand to build up and strengthen all (I Chronicles 29:11-12. Ridderbos, 3-8).

Evangelicals are fond of making distinctions between various stages of the Kingdom of God, especially between His rule in the Old Testament

and his Kingdom in the new. We recognize that there is development and a deepening with the coming of Christ, but any distinctions that reduce the reality of that Kingdom or our obligations to obey the laws of that Kingdom play right into the hands of the type of missionaries we have described and will prevent true renewal.

Ridderbos rightly insists that the New Testament teachings about the Kingdom cannot be understood without reference to the Old Testament. It is in terms of the Kingdom co-extensive with creation that we must understand the following passages. Jesus said, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me*” (Matthew 28:18). There is a plan “to unite *all things* in Him, *things* in heaven and *things* on earth.” God has placed Christ “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name ... and He has put *all things* under His feet and has made Him the head over *all things* for the church ...” (Ephesians 1:10, 21-22). There is the strong insistence in Colossians 1 that somehow everything is subjected to the power of Christ from beginning to end, excluding nothing and including both the material and the spiritual – “in Him *all things* were created” as well as “through Him and for Him.” “In Him *all things* hold together.” He is “pre-eminent” in *everything*. Through Him all things are to be reconciled. Likewise in Hebrews 2, everything has been subjected to Christ. For Him and by Him *all things* exist. All the miracles of Christ are evidence of this totalitarian rule – His rule over nature (Matthew 8:26-27, 14:25, 21:19), over death (Luke 7:14-15; John 11:43-44; Matthew 28:5-6), over satan and his helpers (Matthew 8:28-32, 9:32-33, 12:22), as well as over men and their possessions (Luke 19:29-35; John 2:14-16; I Corinthians 6:19-20, 7:23). Statements that emphasize the provisional nature of the Kingdom in our present

dispensation and some others that would appear to posit limits to the Kingdom must be understood in the context of a total Kingdom.

Though there is much disagreement as to the meaning of God's image in man, from Genesis 1 it would appear certain that this image includes a direct relationship of man's task on earth to God's rule over it. That relationship has often been called that of vice-gerent: man ruling the world in the name of God. Man was to have dominion over all the earth. That was made more concrete in the Garden of Eden which man was to tend. The first recorded command for man was not to pray or build a church or to engage in any other primarily "religious" activity. It was to tend the garden, to rule the earth. This command is commonly referred to as the Cultural Mandate. To carry out this task was man's inherent and created nature; it was the main task for which God created and equipped man. It was not a secondary task; it was not one merely implied in a grander or more spiritual task. It was his task. That was the way in which man was to serve his Creator God. That *was his religious service – and is!*

There are numerous Christians, until recently including Evangelicals, who posit a hierarchical relationship between the material and the spiritual. This view can be traced historically to the influence of Greek philosophy, not to the Bible. The very first chapter in the Bible is a ringing testimony to the great joy God derived from His material creation. There is the seven-fold praise for the material: "And God saw that it was good," with the seventh expanded to read, "And God saw *everything* that He had made, and behold, it was very good." And that in a chapter almost exclusively concentrating on the physical creation! Unless one appreciates the high regard God has for His material creation, it will be difficult to understand the importance of

the Cultural Mandate. A view that relegates the physical to a secondary place in God's scheme invariably ends up emphasizing man's religious duties – now seen in a narrow way – at the expense of his cultural task – then seen as a secular occupation of secondary importance.

We uphold this high regard for the physical in spite of a number of Biblical passages that at first glance would appear to downgrade the world. These passages include Matthew 18:7, Mark 4:19, John 12:31, 18:36, I Corinthians 3:19, James 1:27 and especially James 4:4 and I John 2:15. However, unless one accepts that the concept “world” has various nuances in the Bible, he will have to conclude that the Bible is inconsistent, a conclusion Evangelicals generally tend to avoid. A non-nuanced understanding of the concept would lead to great difficulty in harmonizing, for example, John 8:23 and 15:19. However, a careful study soon reveals that the word “world” sometimes refers to the world as created by God and over which He rules and at other times to the realm of godlessness where men no longer obey their Creator. That is the realm where men worship the creature, an aspect of creation that has then in their imagination become autonomous. It is the pseudo-world that competes with God for human loyalty. It is the world men love more than its Creator. When that world is cut off in men's minds from God Himself, it becomes an object of God's displeasure. However prevalent this situation may be, this does not undercut the high place the material world has in God's scheme of things. Neither does it negate man's basic Cultural Mandate. In fact, the situation makes that task all the more urgent, for man now tends to develop cultural patterns in which one group exploits another. In the midst of this pseudo-kingdom the faithful are called upon to

remind others of the real and original Kingdom and to recommend it by way of their cultural activities.

We have already fallen into a discussion of the state of sin in which the world finds itself and in which men set up their own little kingdoms supposedly autonomous from God. Since man was created for the very purpose of carrying out the Cultural Mandate, even the fall could not stop him from developing his culture(s), for he did not cease to be man. Genesis 4:17-24 presents us with a clear picture as to how man proceeded after the fall. We are told of new cultural developments and inventions, but these were not placed in the service of God or mankind. Lamech boasted of violence and of surpassing God in dealing with his neighbor by replacing justice with revenge. That pattern is typical of the post-fall situation. On the basis of his own spurious kind of wisdom, man thought himself capable of erecting cultural patterns that would lead to his own glory. However, these patterns are invariably twisted, lead him in wrong directions and usually tend towards oppression. Lawless creatures have taken over, criminals who plot coup after coup against the real King. They even devise their own kings or gods to suit the structures they erect for themselves – gods made in their own image: a complete inversion of the original situation.

We have seen that Evangelicals and objectors to the *sharia* posited a secular realm where men of all persuasions can cooperate on basis of a common sense or reason that is fundamentally sound, though perhaps wounded. That this alleged common sense is not so common was amply demonstrated by the *sharia* controversy itself. What appeared common sense to one group hardly seemed common to the

other. Those who have had the enlightening experience of living in various cultures should have come to that discovery.

The sufficiency of common sense is not only challenged by the experience of cross-cultural living, but also by the Bible. John Calvin, the famous sixteenth-century Genevan Reformer, was close to the Bible in his radical sense of sin. He did not restrict its effects to limited areas of life, but spoke of total depravity. This term did not mean contempt for human culture, but it emphasized that human reason is “smothered by clouds of darkness.” Man’s natural gifts were corrupted by the fall. Even in matters relating to the second table of the Decalogue, the light of nature is constantly stifled. In short,

our reason is exposed to so many forms of delusion, is liable to so many errors, stumbles on so many obstacles, is entangled by so many snares, that it is ever wandering from the right direction. Of how little value it is in the sight of God, in regard to all the parts of life, Paul shows, when he says, that we are not “sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves” (II Corinthians 3:5).

Calvin concludes that “everything which our mind conceives, meditates, plans, and resolves, is always evil ...” “It is thus plain that our mind in whatsoever direction it turns, is miserably exposed to vanity.” We are here far removed from any idea of a self-sufficient human reason in *any* area of life. All our reasoning requires the correcting influence of divine revelation, for it has been corrupted in every aspect, not merely wounded in some (Boer, 487). No wonder Paul expected Christians to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind” and encouraged them to “make every thought captive to obey

Christ” (Romans 12:2, II Corinthians 10:5). The politico-economic sector is as much in need of special revelation as the area narrowly conceived of as the religious. All of human culture is in need of it. The wisdom of God and that of the autonomous world cancel each other out and regard each other with mutual contempt.

It is precisely at this point that Mark Noll of Wheaton College has detected a basic difference between Evangelicals and continental Reformed thinkers. Via the Common Sense Realism of Scottish Christians, certain central aspects of the Enlightenment seeped into Evangelical thinking. One of these was the conviction that the human mind is able “to grasp accurately the truth about the world.” Evangelicals inherited a “new optimism about the ability of all human minds .... They labored long to construct appeals to neutral reason, grounded in Common Sense...” Noll continues, “Evangelicals, though wary of the excesses of the Enlightenment ... have accepted some of its fundamental propositions about the ... sovereignty of reason.” Evangelicals “have been impressed with the potential of reason....” Though it is fair to say that Evangelical missionaries and their administrators were and are by and large hardly aware of such philosophical developments, they have nevertheless inherited these notions and they have served as unexamined assumptions underlying their missionary work. In distinction from Presbyterian Calvinists, continental Reformed thinkers have stuck closer to both Scripture and Calvin on this score in their rejection of a neutral and basically sound reason.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we must regard the law mediated through Moses for the people of Israel. The Gospel of his day was not merely a “spiritual” message relating primarily to Jewish

souls, but it was a message that was explicitly spelled out and covered every area of their culture. These laws constituted a case of interaction of the Spirit of God with an ancient Mid-eastern culture that produced a unique type of legislation that was a demonstration of the Kingdom of God in that situation. It was in some ways limited to its own stage of a progressive revelation. More specifically religious concerns were totally “mixed up” with so-called secular concerns. However, that is not a good way to describe it, except for dualists who like to work with such distinctions. Once one has caught on to the totality of the Kingdom and its claims upon us and once one has rejected the traditional separation of the spiritual from the rest of life, then one can no longer speak of mixed-up categories, for they are then seen in their integral relationship to each other. Obviously God had a deep interest in health and hygiene, in animals and farming, in politics, work and food, in business, family affairs and all else. In no way can it be argued on basis of the Bible that these were secondary concerns to Him. The spiritual was not separated as a special category. The good news for Israel’s welfare was totalitarian. It was a full Gospel for that stage of the Kingdom of God. It was a necessary Gospel that taught Israel how they could build just structures, necessary because independently their reasoning would constantly produce injustice and oppression.

The New Testament Gospel was for a wider world. Now, after so many centuries of struggling predominantly with a single people, Christ’s coming ended the particularistic interlude. God again turned His full attention to all nations as He had done before Abraham. Since the Gospel was now to be applied to a much wider world, the specific rules and regulations of the Old Testament would no longer do.

Though these were thus left behind, yet Christ insisted that the law in principle was not revoked. The application would have to vary, but the concern for the various cultural areas was not pronounced dead. Christ still called upon God's people to seek the Kingdom and its righteousness. Both in the Magnificat and in Luke 4, Christ's mission was directly related to overthrowing oppressors and freeing captives – and both passages have their roots in the Old Testament.

At the end of his earthly walk, the Lord added a new commandment known as the Great Commission. Evangelicals are all acutely aware of this Commission. However, it was not something completely new without any connection with the past. Jesus' power is asserted to be without limits in the grand New Testament style to which we have already drawn attention. The disciples are to witness to "all nations," a term that should immediately remind us of the divine promise to Abraham that through him "all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Genesis 12:3). This language gets picked up again by the Psalmist and the prophets who repeatedly refer to the coming of the nations (Psalms 22:27, 67:2, 72:11 & 17, 86:9, 117:1; Isaiah 2:2-4, 25:6-7, 52:15, 55:5, 66:18-21; Jeremiah 3:17, Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 2:11, 8:22-23). It is especially Isaiah 2:2-4 and its parallel in Micah that link the coming of the nations to knowing the law. They will want to know that law, that divine example of how to work out the Cultural Mandate in a specific setting. The Great Commission, instead of picturing the nations as coming, tells the disciples to meet them where they are, but the link is too obvious to be ignored. The purpose of this Commission is to teach people all that Christ has commanded his disciples and that includes the basic intentions of the Old

**Testament law, for not an iota of it was revoked. The specifics, yes, they were obsolete, but the underlying concern was to remain.**

**XXXXXX**

**The fact that many Evangelicals are not familiar with the term “Cultural Mandate” is no innocent development, but not the most serious. The fact that most of them see no relationship between the Great Commission and the Old Testament concept of law that reaches all the way back to Genesis 1:26-27 is a very serious matter. The Great Commission has been loosened from its Biblical moorings and is considered mostly in isolation. Whereas in Matthew the disciples are to go to the nations, in Mark 16:15 they are told to go to the whole of creation. We are aware, of course, of the doubtful legitimacy of this passage, but it does indicate that somewhere along the line there was a much broader understanding of the Great Commission than there is today among Evangelicals. Our study of the SUM has clearly shown that Evangelicals today tend to subordinate the Cultural Mandate to the Great Commission. Medicine and education are tools for evangelism; they have no right of their own in the Kingdom of God. This is almost the very opposite of what we find in the Bible, where the Great Commission is given so that nations and peoples may once again know the law of God, the way of peace in the full Kingdom. If one can speak of subordination, it is the Great Commission that is subordinate to the Cultural Mandate, not vice versa. The Gospel is to be preached so that men may know the way of the Lord for this world and the next.**

**So far we have sought to indicate the scope of the Kingdom of God. Our aim here has been to undercut the type of dualism that tends to**

divide life into sacred and secular realms. When missions operate with such distinctions, they are actually aiding the process of secularization by not paying sufficient attention to the so-called “non-religious” concerns of life. They then declare certain cultural areas outside of their purview and do not preach the will of God for such areas. These are left for men to struggle through in their own autonomous way. We have tried to show that there is no area in which man is not called upon to serve his Maker. We have shown also that man needs the aid of divine revelation for each area, because sin has affected his entire being, even his rational faculty.

Another distinction often made is that between religious on the one hand and the secular, rational or scientific on the other. It is supposedly a distinction that goes parallel to that between subjective and objective thinking. The opponents to the *sharia* worked with this distinction. The Bible, however rejects such divisions. It does not regard religion as one area of life alongside others. In the Bible we find man standing directly before God in a covenantal relationship that is, as we have already seen, totalitarian. Man was mandated to care for the world in the fear of God. Because of his fall, man no longer understood this task and, though he continued to develop his culture, he did so in ways that went against God’s design and ended up with oppressive structures. In response, God sent His Gospel, first in the Old Testament and then in our present form, to renew men’s ways and, especially, their hearts.

To be sure, many, if not most, fail to be so renewed. They either have not heard or they have rejected this total claim upon them – or they reduce it in Evangelical style. But does that make them less religious? According to the Bible, hardly. Just because men do not know the will

of God does not mean they have lost their created nature or that they are no longer confronted by Him. God has created man to obey and serve Him in this world, to develop this world to His glory. It is the created inalienable nature of man to so serve and work. And when his heart is turned away from the living God, either in whole or in part, he will fill the resultant void in his heart and mind by devoting his creative energies to some aspect of creation instead of to the Creator Himself. According to Romans 1:25, "... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator ...." Bluntly contrary to humanistic faith in the grandeur of human rationality, the Apostle Paul declares that "they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (Romans 1:21-23). The point of these quotations is not to insult modern man – though he probably deserves it! – but to indicate that from the Biblical perspective man always confronts God in one way or another. He is forced by the very nature of his created makeup to respond. If he does not serve the living God, he inevitably will fill the void with some other goal, idea or god. *He never becomes less religious. He simply exchanges one religion or loyalty for another.* It is thus never a question of faith or reason/common sense, but of *which religion* or loyalty it is that guides him in his life's pursuit. As the prophet Micah put it, "For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God ...."

There is another aspect of Biblical teaching that militates against the compartmentalization of faith and reason or of religion and common

sense. The Bible posits a basic unity to a person that has its concentration point in what is frequently called “heart.” The Bible, according to Berkouwer, a Reformed dogmatician at the Free University in Amsterdam, uses especially the term “heart” to refer to man in his “concentrated unity.” The Bible says “Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23). According to I Samuel 16:7, the Lord looks first of all at a man’s heart, because that is the centre of a person where all other issues are basically decided, both good and evil. “My heart instructs me” and that instruction comes from God (Psalms 16:17). God tries men’s “minds and heart” (Psalms 7:9, 26:2; Jeremiah 11:20, 17:10; I Thessalonians 2:4). All our sins come “out of the heart of man” (Mark 7:21). God knows a man’s heart (Acts 1:24, 15:8; Luke 16:15; Romans 8:27, Revelation 2:23). No wonder then that the speaker in Proverbs 23:26 asks his son to give him his heart, for once that heart has been captured, all else will follow unless a person decides to compartmentalize himself and live in a dualistic fashion. However, in the last case one has not given his whole heart. What a man is in his heart will influence all his works, also his political and economic activities. If that heart is fully committed to God, all his works will thus be committed. If some other loyalty has captured the heart, all one’s works will take him into a different direction. One’s heart is basically a religious entity. It is “that place in a man where God works, and from out of which he exercises an influence also upon the head and the brain” (Runner, 66). This is another way of saying that all our activities have a religious foundation, consciously or otherwise. *We are, all of us, first of all believers, not thinkers or rational creatures.* The rationalist is simply a *believer* in the autonomy of reason.

Evangelicals tend to be partial rationalists, i.e., in the areas of culture outside of the church, home and personal morality.

### *General Christian Alternatives*

There is little point in talking about the renewal of mission organizations without also talking about a renewal of the Christian community as a whole. Missions are representatives, not of Christ only, but also of the sending constituency. Though missionaries often represent the most progressive elements of their constituency, they are still a reflection of that entire community. Missions cannot undergo radical change without the constituency also experiencing it.

When we talk about the sending constituency, we are no longer talking only about Western churches. We are also talking about the churches that have arisen out of Western missionary efforts and that are now themselves sending churches. Some of the newer churches now send their own missionaries abroad. The church that has come out of the work of the SUM has her emissaries not only in the remote corners of Nigeria's Borno State, but also in the Sudan. *All* churches need to become more radical in their understanding of the Gospel as well as in their approach to the world around them. It is not simply their verbal message that needs to become radicalized, but especially the message that is evoked from their economic style of life. It remains true that actions speak louder than words. By radical in this context we mean applying the full Gospel to all dimensions of life, including the politico-economic.

In some sense it can be said that the church's programme is to be determined by the world. And if the world is not to determine the programme entirely, at least the latter should be heavily influenced by the world. When the church determines its own emphasis in isolation from the world, it is likely to come with answers to questions that are not being asked. The question of justification by faith was a burning one at the time of the Reformation and it rightly absorbed much of the church's attention. That question remains an important one in the church's general teaching, but it is not an issue with which society in general is concerned today. If we wish the world to take the church seriously, we must develop a Christian approach to the problems with which men in general are now struggling. What is the message with respect to energy, ecology, science, racism, poverty and affluence? What is the Christian alternative to socialism and capitalism?

It is not what Christians *say* about such issues that counts so much as to how they react to them in practice. Furthermore, though we emphasize that we must be concerned with such questions in order to be taken seriously by the world, that is not the main reason for such concerns. We draw attention to this reason because Evangelicals most readily understand such reasoning. The SUM indicated interest in health and education primarily because they were considered good tools for evangelism. But then such interests become matters of strategy or tactics. As soon as they should prove not be bringing in any converts, they could be dropped. The *basic* reason we must be concerned with such earthy topics is that the Bible takes the world very seriously. They are all part of the Kingdom. The Cultural Mandate covers them all.

The first general step to be taken by the Christian community is to place the Kingdom as we have discussed it at the centre of their policies and to recognize the Cultural Mandate as the basis of all commandments. This is not to downgrade evangelism and church activities, but to place them in their proper perspective. It is to recognize that they are not ends in themselves, but means to the end of equipping people to be able to carry out the original mandate. Seek first the Kingdom and its righteousness, Christ instructs us. If folk need to be evangelized in order to even be able or willing to seek that Kingdom, and that is indeed the case in this fallen world, then we must evangelize them. But we do not evangelize them, as is the fashion of some, so that they in turn can evangelize others and they in turn evangelize others and they in turn ... - as if that is a goal in itself. We evangelize folk so they are once again equipped to seek that Kingdom and fulfill the Cultural Mandate. That should be the focus of all our evangelism and church work.

This implies a second step, namely ridding ourselves of all dualisms that would give the spiritual priority over the material in the sense that God would prefer the spiritual, while the material be relegated a secondary place. A major criticism of Evangelicals and their missions has been that their dualism led them to ignore some of the most basic realities in the colonial situation. They were not interested in these realities primarily; the priority went to more “spiritual” concerns. This dualism robbed them of all motivation to do a serious professional study of economic developments and focus the light of Scripture to them. Thus they were open to what we do not hesitate to call the heresy of capitalism. They had no Christian tools to analyze it.

The two steps outlined above would lead the Christian community to reflect Christianly on all areas of life, including the politico-economic. We must discover how we can fulfill the Cultural Mandate in these sectors. This would go beyond merely seeking for wrongs or immoralities; it can lead to concrete Christian contributions that provide new directions. That has been the concerted effort of the Free Reformed University of Amsterdam as well as its sister organization, the Institute for Christian Studies of Toronto. The need for such alternatives becomes clear when one realizes the all-embracing effect of sin. It means that no area of our human activities is free from its debilitating effect and it is only through communal, professional and Scriptural reflection that we can *partially* overcome this effect.

### *Economic Reforms*

God created us to serve Him and Him alone. As soon as man begins to replace God or ascribe priority to anything else in this creation, he not only transgresses the first commandment, but he also sets the stage for injustice and exploitation. This is precisely what happened in the capitalist world out of which the SUM arose and which it supported. The priority of profits is a clear case in point of God being deprived of His throne in economic activity. Though the Evangelical may have continued to give God priority in his theoretical theology – in so far as Evangelicals even had any of that at the time – in the economic sector He was clearly dethroned. True, it was thought that if only one allows the market forces to have their way, God would have His way. But capitalist theory had it that everyone should struggle for his own benefit and the invisible hand would guide its total effect towards a

just equilibrium. That is indeed a peculiar way of serving God: be selfish and He will protect the community. It was a strange dialectic in Evangelical thought that by supporting capitalist theory and thus giving priority to the profit motive, that is, to an idol, one was in fact letting God have His way.

A major assumption throughout this whole study is that nothing may have priority in any sector of life other than God. We exclude the priority of profits as a legitimate Christian option in business and are prepared to defend the thesis that the priority of profits is one of the most dangerous heresies modern civilization has spawned. It is time the church declares it a heresy because it is such an obvious transgression of the first commandment and because it has led and continues to lead to such obvious forms of exploitation. Evangelicals have recognized certain exploitative results and have crusaded against them. They have seldom recognized that the priority of profits *inevitably* leads to exploitation and that the way to avoid such exploitation is by dethroning the economic idol of profit, not by superficial crusades of charity and moralism that pick up the victims along the way.

When God is replaced by an idol in any sector, the direction of events within that sector will always be towards oppression and exploitation, even if some individuals operating within the sector may have a personal commitment to God. The role of Evangelicals in the Industrial Revolution is a clear example of this thesis. The only *defence* they had against the *obvious* problems was moralism, but they did not have an alternative economic posture or theory that would help solve the *basic* problem. There is inevitably a tension within the Evangelical stance between morality and the priority of

profits, a tension that cannot be resolved without giving up the one or the other. It is a tension, moreover, passed on to the Nigerian Christian businessman who often is at a complete loss as to how to reconcile his service to God and his business. Many doubt that it is possible or even desirable. Most seek to solve it in terms of the familiar dualism.

The skeptic may ask how the priority of profits leads to oppression. My general answer is that when money takes priority over God and people, then the secondary place accorded the latter two parties must lead to oppression or exploitation every time the claims of the idol are at variance with the demand of the latter. As long as there is no real pressure, the oppression and exploitation can be kept within "moral" limits, but as economic pressures build up, the force of moral scruples will wear thinner and thinner.

One of the best examples of the tension between serving God and priority of profits was a conference sponsored by the Council on Religion and International Affairs that dealt with the whole question of the ethics of investments. Basically the conference was not able to resolve the tension because no one questioned the basic premise of Western business ethics, namely the priority of profits (Powers, 1972). They sought to solve the ethical problems faced by the multinationals, but were not able to do so because they refused to touch the root problem.

The priority of profits led to the excesses of labour abuse in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century factory. This was countered partly by some reforms inaugurated by Evangelicals who were shocked at the *obvious* immorality of the abuses. It was also countered by the growing labour

movement who met force with force. A few Christian prophets pointed to the underlying problem, namely the priority of profits, but they received no hearing among Evangelicals. The priority of profits underlies the whole development of the colonial economy, but Evangelical missionaries failed to pinpoint the basic problem and battled only against the *obvious* immoralities. The intense battle for survival of the earlier colonial companies, their constant weeding out the Nigerian participants, their harnessing development in the interest of their own profits – all these can be explained only by the priority of profits. The priority of profits has led and continues to lead to advertising that is increasingly subtle in its suggestive powers, that encourages materialism and feeds upon all the ambitions and desires of man that stand in stark contrast to the teachings of the Gospel – fame, pleasure, sexism, ambition, prestige. The priority of profits is the reason that so many useless items are marketed for a frivolous society – the West and the southern elite - , not to speak of inferior quality or built-in obsolescence.

Though the multinationals constitute a special problem because of their great power and omnipresence, in a sense there is no essential difference between the owner of the small table in the Nigerian village shop who sells soap and matches, the owner of the neighbourhood grocery in North America or the owners (shareholders) and managers of the multinationals. Once profit has been accorded priority, they all stand ready in one degree or another to exploit their neighbor, especially when there is an economic crunch. Julius Nyerere correctly observed that there is no principial difference between a capitalist – read “rich person” – and one who would like to become one. The SUM and fellow travelers expected

colonialism to produce liberation precisely because they failed to understand that the priority of profits cannot bring liberation. The Scripture makes it too clear that idolatry always leads to slavery and that true freedom can come only through Christ, not only in a theological sense, but also in the economic sphere.

The above must not be understood as a tirade against profits. The Bible teaches clearly that a labourer is worthy of his hire and even one's oxen must not be muzzled. Whether one is a trader, a politician, a missionary, an executive or a farmer, he is entitled to his reward. He has needs. A fair profit (income) is legitimate. It is the *priority* of the profit motive that we reject. No one becomes a missionary for the sake of profit or money, but a missionary is entitled to his reward. He becomes a missionary ostensibly because he is so called by God. He has been called to serve. That, in short, is the calling of all people and organizations, whether church or business, mission or multinational. Service and responsibility – these must have the priority in the Kingdom of God, and all these other things will come, according to our Saviour Himself.

Neither should the above be understood as a tirade against private enterprise. On the whole, it appears that private enterprise is more efficient than state enterprise. This difference in efficiency is no accident, but is a confirmation of the Biblical teaching about gifts and talents. These gifts or abilities require freedom to be stimulated and developed, something often not possible in government corporations. Nigerian government corporations are a prime example of the stifling effect and consequent inefficiency of an enterprise that is not free to run without a host of external political considerations.

It is nothing short of amazing that the Christian community is generally silent on the investments issue. Christians taught by their Scripture to be responsible for their neighbor and to seek his salvation, will without apparent qualms invest in enterprises without ever asking about the practices and aims of the organization, let alone its results other than profits. There appears to be an almost total lack of a sense of responsibility in this area. Not only is this true for most individual Christians who invest, but also for churches and other Christian organizations. The Roman Catholic Church and many other North American denominations are enthusiastic investors who, at the time of writing, seldom exercised their God-given responsibility. My own retirement scheme is an ecclesiastical pension fund that at the time of writing was based on such irresponsible investment. Most churches, according to Charles Powers, an avid student of such affairs, generally “have invested their wealth with the sole purpose of gaining the highest possible return for their programs” (*Responsibility*, 58).

The investment portfolio of the churches is considerable. I do not have the most recent statistics, but in 1973 a United Church of Canada committee reported that American churches held a “generally accepted” estimated “\$160 billion in real estate and investments – more than the combined assets of American Telephone and Telegraph and five leading oil companies ....” The United Church of Canada at the time had over \$100 million invested, while its individual members were estimated to have \$2.5 billion in savings accounts alone (United Church, 2-3). This is a large sum for a nation of a mere 24 million people of whom only a few million belong to that church. According to Alan Storkey, a British Reformed social critic, the Church of England in Great Britain, is one of the largest land and property owners in the

country. That church, furthermore, has some 300 million Pounds invested in shares. (389)

There is the equally amazing phenomenon that, while on the one hand Western churches send their missionaries all over the globe, on the other hand, the Christian community, acting both corporately and individually, join with their non-Christian counterparts to organize profit-oriented businesses and then send them abroad without apparently asking how or what such businesses are doing for the true development of their host countries. They collect dividends and reinvest part of this income in missionary activities in the same countries. Members of the missionary community ought to be sensitive to such incongruities and seriously ask whether they should in good conscience continue to accept such income. If they cannot afford to reject it, at the very least they should help make their constituency aware of such anomalies and, together with them, search for alternatives that are in line with the Christian mission rather than working against it.

One may well ask whether investors can extricate themselves from such situations. After taking all the facts into consideration, many conclude that it is almost impossible to do anything about it, especially because the laws in countries such as the United States of America are basically supportive of the order described (Craig, 20-30). Quite apart from individual Christian investors, churches are involved in international financial transactions that would hardly be possible without the services of the very organizations whose Christian legitimacy we question. The pensions of church employees and other Christians depend on such investments. Even the World Council of

Churches, conscious as it is of these problems, finds it difficult to extricate itself because of Swiss laws (Van Elderen).

It is a matter of rejoicing that the Evangelical Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization has identified this situation as a missiological problem because it involves members of the Western churches somehow in oppression of the poor. However, they also recognize the problem to be so complex that they confess to be at a loss as to what to do about it (Lausanne, 26).

Indeed, what can one do in such an intricate situation that seems to be supra-personal? Powers is well aware of the intricacies involved, but he rejects the negative answer as well as an optimistic one. He has tried to show “that the rhetoric of both ‘There is nothing we can do’ and its counterpart, ‘You could do it easily if you wanted to,’ is misplaced.” “Every investor can do something,” he insists. He shows that there are indeed significant things that can be done, more than merely making a few statements as the Lausanne Committee has done: “So we feel able to make only these comments,” comments that are valuable in themselves, but that have lost their thrust through repetition without concrete action (*Responsibility*, 80, 26).

Any Christian approach to the problem under discussion must be based on a positive appreciation of economic life as an important sector of the Kingdom of God. Solutions sought in a framework that denigrates economic concerns to a secondary realm and/or that are based on some dualistic reduction of the Kingdom will always fall short of the goal. The Bible itself is full of positive references to economic concerns and nowhere betrays a negative spirit with respect to this area of human activity. Economic activities are meant

to contribute to the development of society and the Gospel shows that this be done by being service-oriented.

And, of course, both in Nigeria and North America, Christians are in a strong position to force some basic changes upon the economy, though we are not saying it will be easy. The claim that nothing can be done is one of Satan's most successful ploys. It is a myth that must be broken; Christians must be robbed of this excuse. They *can* change things. And if they cannot dislodge profit from its throne and so dismantle the basis of the capitalist order, they can provide alternatives that are more in keeping with the justice and liberty of the Kingdom. The basic obstacles here are not the economic circumstances, but lack of integrated Christian vision and faith.

We might have given the impression that Christians are not struggling at all with these problems. The time has come to correct this impression by pointing to some efforts. In addition to the organization described in Powers' 1971 book, there are at least two ecumenical organizations in North America that try to make a difference. In Canada, a number of churches have together formed the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (129 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto) and in the USA there is The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility referred to from here on as "Taskforce" and "Center" respectively. These organizations help their members so as to enable them to speak knowledgeably and with integrity as they proclaim the witness of the Lord to the economic structures of the day in their own countries and abroad. They do research in the activities of corporations, prepare briefs addressing such corporations and provide all sorts of relevant information through newsletters and many other publications, including a handbook for shareholder action written by

**E.A. Craig. It is obvious from their publications that they do have an impact occasionally on corporations either directly or through their members or others sensitized by them. Their work is done at a professional level and leaves no one with any simplistic notions. Unfortunately, it seems their work seldom reaches the average church member, businessman or parish clergy.**

**The organizations just described are ecclesiastical organs. It is the churches who are applying pressure on corporations, the same churches that also supply relatively large pension funds to those same corporations. In this way they try to exercise their stewardship responsibility. They have begun to realize that investment brings with it responsibility to know the policies of the companies in which they invest as well as to seek to effect changes where needed.**

**Such efforts do not have to be limited to churches. Individual Christians have the same leverage and possibly more, for many of them in both North America and Nigeria control relatively large blocks of shares in various corporations. It is possible for individual shareholders to “conscientize” their fellow shareholders. Better still, individual Christian investors could form an organization in which they could reflect together on their responsibilities and formulate a Christian approach to investments and business in general. No doubt both Taskforce and Center would be willing to provide their expertise if called upon to establish such organizations. In addition the Christian press could be utilized to publicize such attempts and urge others to join. Powers, Taskforce and Center all provide many suggestions and much advice as to what could be done. Christians could even pool their investments together and organize corporations responsive to the Kingdom. They could take over control of some existing**

companies. They could set up (a) mutual fund(s). In both Nigeria and North America there is hardly a limit to what Christians could do – if they had the necessary insight and faith.

What we are proposing in the above paragraph goes a step beyond that taken by Taskforce and Center. Those organizations are basically concerned to oppose wrong and oppressive practices. Their attempts differ from those of 19<sup>th</sup>-century British Evangelical actions in that the concerns of these present-day organizations are international and they engage in much professional research. The approaches differ also in that these modern crusaders pursue their aims right into the boardrooms and shareholders' meetings. However, there is one place where both stop: they do not seem to question or challenge the basic motive of capitalist business, namely the priority of profits. Both groups have sought or are seeking to ameliorate obviously immoral situations without rejecting the basic premises that have caused the situation to begin with. In principle we are thus still confronted with what was called the "ambulance approach." The approach of Taskforce *c.s.* sounds radical, but in fact it falls just short of that: it does not directly touch the *radix*, the root of the problem.

Our proposals go beyond amelioration or immoral practices. We are suggesting that Christian investors prayerfully search for a positive Christian approach to investing and to economics in general, an alternative to the capitalist model. Though this search would undoubtedly be conducted in conjunction with Christian economists – yes, they do exist! - , the aim of such an exercise would not merely be to construct a nice academic model but to actually seek to embody the newly-found principles in economic structures. Since there are few, if any, models around, the approach we advocate would

probably require experimental structures, separate organizations in which Christians would be free to seek to apply their discoveries. Personally, I doubt that Christians can do much to reform the structures and purposes of existing corporations to such an extent that they would be allowed to pursue Kingdom goals. It would be contrary to the very reason for which most shareholders invest. It might be possible, however, for Christians together to gain control over an existing one and begin prayerful experimentation or to set up their own alternative. But let no one say that nothing can be done when so many Christians invest!

One small model that could well serve as an initial example is that of Interlink. This organization has for its motto “Linking needs and resources together.” It “is an association for Christians committed to serving Christ in the marketplace and to help others do the same, by sharing their skills and resources where they are needed most.” It seeks to pair up resources and needs in a way in which both parties take risks, assume responsibilities, work together and share rewards. (Interlink pamphlet) Interlink consists of business people helping others build up businesses of their own. It is not a charitable organization, but it pays dividends to its shareholders. It is a business and makes a profit, but its primary concern is not the profit, but helping develop sources of income for the poor.

In 1978, Interlink gave birth to International Farming System, Inc. (IFS) This is a “for-profit company whose area of expertise is the assistance of subsistence farmers to become true small scale commercial farmers through the establishment of farm service centers.” IFS is seeking to develop machinery appropriate for small farms and to seek ways to transfer the production technology for such equipment to the area of

the world where it will be used. The farm centres are owned by local Christian businessmen who are committed to “Christian principles of doing business. A percentage of the profits ... supports local ministries for community development, medical and educational facilities, and specialized farmer training.” (IFS pamphlet) Though at this point it is not quite clear to us just what these Christian principles of business consist of, it is clear that here we have an example of a private enterprise making a profit, or aiming to make a profit, without profit being the reason for its existence. The main purpose of the organization is to serve, while it is not a charitable organization.

Then there is Arthur Pratt, the owner of Pratt Printing Co., located in Indianapolis, IN, with whom I have had both business and personal correspondence and whose integrity I have every reason to trust. At his company, he writes, priorities are:

1. Quality, service, and fair price to the customer.
2. Good pay, adequate benefits, fair treatment, and real participation of employees.
3. Remuneration for management and stockholders in equal proportion to what the employees receive.

It is especially his description of employee involvement in the running of the company and in the decision-making process that strikes one. His is a real attempt to create a community of partners, each of whom contributes of his talents. Employees are not considered an economic liability. However, Pratt admits that retaining such a community spirit may be easier for a small company like his than it would be for a

transnational. In his book, he ends a chapter on this subject with a striking prayer:

**God grant that we set the right goal in business, which is service, human fulfillment, and economic justice for all, not simply productivity or profit.... Grant us not to idolize business, industry, or productivity, whether they be in socialist or capitalist economies. Through Him Who made Himself poor so that others could be rich. Amen (Pratt, 35-40).**

This prayer is striking because of the context in which it appears: a businessman's description of his company.

I promised a more contemporary example of Christian approaches to business. The indented material below is from a letter of Doug Seebeck, President of Partners Worldwide, an American organization developing businesses in the global South, in their Annual Report of 2012.

**More than ever before, Christian businesspeople are being affirmed, encouraged, and commissioned as Christ's agents in their sphere of influence—their employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, and communities. Over 17,000 businesspeople in 23 countries are using their “business as their ministry” – impacting the market place, creating jobs and transforming lives.**

**The 2012 results show that businesses created and sustained 33,604 jobs, making a direct impact on the lives of 170,000 people. A job changes everything for these families. No longer dependent on aid or handouts, they have a sustainable income to lift themselves out of poverty, providing food, a secure home,**

education and medicine for their children and family members. These image-bearers of Christ are able to live out their calling to business!

We are constantly amazed by the entrepreneurial and resourceful nature of the businesspeople in our partnership network. Often under very difficult business climates, they use their business in Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things: mentoring at risk youth, starting schools and medical clinics, providing more nutritious and affordable food for their communities, encouraging earth-friendly alternatives to land use, starting community or economic development organizations, and employing people who otherwise couldn't find a job (Accessed 29 Dec/2013--[http://partnersworldwide.org/assets/uploads/resource-library/files/Annual\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://partnersworldwide.org/assets/uploads/resource-library/files/Annual_Report_2012.pdf)).

True, the above is all about small businesses. Large corporations are so much more impressive and powerful. However, even in countries with towering corporations such as Canada, communications from the Prime Minister's Office indicate that small businesses create far more jobs than their gigantic counterparts. They are thus a strategic target not to be despised. However, once you begin to take seriously some of the most basic Christian tenets about human relationships as I have listed them a couple of pages ahead, then you must begin to dream and envision how all these can be utilized in the corporate world. One thing should become very clear: *We cannot operate with profit as the major bottom line.*

**We are aware, of course, of the traditional resistance amongst Evangelicals to the type of Christian involvement represented by Taskforce. The church, it will object *ad nauseam*, must occupy itself with preaching the Gospel. Any attempt to sidetrack her from this prime responsibility must be condemned. We fully agree. However, together with the Lausanne Committee (Lausanne, p. 26), we reject the notion that economic concerns can be separated from those of mission. We have seen what happens when missions claim to be politically neutral: they become downright foolish and blind. The same is true for the church's involvement in economic affairs. As soon as the church owns property it becomes involved in them. One will usually find the church a vigorous advocate for tax exemption – certainly an economic issue. As soon as the church has money, it can no longer avoid making decisions about what to do with it – and we have seen that the church in North America has plenty to make decisions about. In fact, many churches invest in the very corporations that recently have become targets of criticism for being exploitative and for introducing distortions in the fragile economies of the South. Some of these investing churches are the very ones that will reject the involvement of churches in the concerns represented by Taskforce. They will argue that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” while they finance their pensions with the most carnal means. These same Evangelicals have not hesitated in the past to engage their churches in crusades against tobacco and alcohol industries, using all legal, political and economic levers available to them. Today we see the same with respect to the abortion issue. What, I ask, is so principally different about the concerns of this study (Tutu)?**

**There are certain Biblical teachings of which Evangelicals are very aware, but which they seldom apply to the world of economics. As you read the list below, ask yourself to what extent these should be applied to the economic sphere, to the question of profits, to the items one manufactures, distributes, to the quality of these products, to the wages of your labourers and price of your goods, to your advertising practices and investment portfolios. These are the teachings that insist on our mutual responsibility for each other that may and cannot be limited to personal morality or to narrowly-conceived religious concerns. They are to be applied to all life's circumstances.**

**Do to others as you would have them do to you.**

**Love your neighbor as yourself.**

**Love your neighbor as Christ did: He laid down His life (John 15:12-13).**

**Life is gained by losing it.**

**Pursue peace and mutual upbuilding, but do not destroy God's work for food (Romans 14:19-21).**

**Seek the advantage of others so they may be saved (I Corinthians 10:33).**

**Do good to all according to the opportunity you have (Galatians 6:10).**

**All gifts and talents are to be used for the building of the body**

**(Ephesians 4:11-16, I Peter 4:10).**

**Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness.**

**Our hope is for a situation in “which righteousness dwells” (II Peter 3:13).**

**When such teachings are applied to the average business or industry, there is no doubt that they call for the most radical revamping of purpose, aim and practice.**

**Even for those who are suspicious of much of the literature criticizing corporations and who therefore refuse to reconsider their investment responsibility, we ask whether they are sure that their investments have the results demanded by the teachings above. Can they claim with positive assurance based on responsible investigation that their investments bring peace and result in mutual up-building? Are those handling their investments really engaged in seeking the advantage of their clientele in the Biblical sense? If one has no responsible assurance that he can answer such questions affirmatively, he may end up embarrassed before the Lord one day – and that is something Evangelicals rightfully wish to avoid.**

**Missions have long been concerned with total liberation. The SUM was driven by that motif from its very beginning. However, its conception of liberation and the avenue pursued to attain it derailed because of the tie up with capitalist philosophy and practice. They were right in that we do have responsibility for each other world-wide. The gifts and resources of one area of the world can serve to stimulate the development of another. The United Nations (UN) and WCC as well as the leadership of the poor nations all agree on this**

mutual responsibility. And such concerns cannot be separated from mission – that too was fully recognized by the SUM and the Lausanne Committee. It is likely that free enterprise is often in a better position to fulfill such responsibility than are governments, but then it must be truly *free* enterprise in the Christian sense. It must be enterprise free first of all from the idol of profit, free to serve, free also to pay a just reward to all the team members, and free from all compulsion to exploit any parties, including the consumer. Christians, both in Nigeria and North America, have the wherewithal to carry on such free enterprise. And Christians in *both* parts of the world must cease their duplicity of bringing the Gospel with one hand and exploiting their neighbor whom they evangelize with the other in order to pay for the evangelism! It is not the lack of resources that prevents Christians, but lack of insight and faith. The Lausanne Committee has done Evangelicals a terrible disservice with her fatalistic attitude. Christians *can* make a difference, and they should in the name of Christ. We must begin by exorcising the evil spirits in our hearts that prevent us from taking the necessary steps.

There is always the question as to who should engage in the kinds of concerns we have been discussing. While Evangelicals and their churches have displayed few qualms about investing in economic activities guided by carnal philosophies, they have simultaneously tended to reject the notion that the church should involve herself in the questions we are pursuing. Then, suddenly, they will argue that the church should not engage in such politico-economic questions! When churches do involve themselves, they are quickly brushed aside as “Liberals” and by that token they can be rightfully ignored. Evangelicals have mistakenly argued that once a person is converted,

he will automatically adopt Christian economic standards. It is these converted individual Christians, who are expected to conduct their economic pursuits in a Christian manner. But we have seen where this leads to in previous chapters.

The approach of the WCC and of some of her members is very similar to that of Taskforce. A third model is provided by segments of the Reformed community. According to this model, the church should provide basic Biblical teachings with respect to socio-economic concerns, but it leaves actual working in these areas to the membership. That membership, however, is not regarded as consisting of mere individuals who find themselves scattered from Monday to Saturday. The members are encouraged to express the unity of the Body of Christ also in these non-ecclesiastical areas of the Kingdom of God by organizing all sorts of Christian organizations that are expected to work together in prayer, inspired by the Scriptures and working professionally with the problems in any given area of culture.

Though I basically would opt for the last approach described, I would not insist on all Christians pursuing that one approach. Difference of opinion about the proper approach has often led to heated arguments while nothing was done in the meantime. The first imperative is to recognize the critical need for prayer, reflection and action and then to find Christians who will cooperate with you according to the insights given by the Spirit of God. And then we ought to find ways of cooperating with others as well who share the same concerns but who have chosen a different model of operation.

The Nigerian church, having come out of the kind of mission we have described, shares many similarities with her Western counterparts. Though the economic involvement of most Nigerian Christians is not as far-flung as that of Western Christians, they do participate in the multinationals hosted by their country and, more recently, in their own corporations. They themselves frequently initiate such partnerships. And it is not infrequent that one overhears Nigerians lament that though they are glad that colonialism is past, the Nigerian elites that have replaced their predecessors are not less exploitative. Since the original Christian message was couched in a capitalistic framework, Nigerian Christians are faced with the temptation to make hay while they can as quickly as they can. The dualistic Gospel they have inherited has provided them with no resources to resist the capitalistic spirit that buttresses the inclinations Christians must always battle against within their own hearts.

In keeping with the capitalistic spirit, the Nigerian Christian community has developed an attitude of awe for people who have been able to wrangle their way up the economic or political ladder(s), while there is simultaneously a general consensus that no one can be successful in those fields without having engaged in unscrupulous practices. Still, it is those successful ones who are invariably placed in seats of honour at Christian functions (Alabi).

Graduates of the SUM's Gindiri complex of schools are in very influential positions and most of them do little to hide their gratitude. We have seen that the SUM's educational philosophy basically meant Christian Religious Knowledge courses, an emphasis on morals and, for the rest, "neutral" courses based on government textbooks. Education has been accepted as the way up the economic ladder into

the corps of elite that has become very adept at exploiting the *status quo* for their own benefit. Education was not geared to develop keen Christian insight or critical minds so much as learning how to squeeze the most out of existing situations with a veneer of personal morality on top. Education has become the avenue to power. One Christian secondary school now taken over by the government had as its motto, "Knowledge is Power." It is true of course, but in the Nigerian context the contemporary notion of power is very secular and raw.

In many states of Nigeria, educational institutions have been taken over by the government, but now there is agitation in some states to return them to their former proprietors. Recently, however, former Governor Bola Ige of Oyo State, an openly practicing Christian, rejected any attempt to return the schools in his state to the churches. His reason was precisely that the churches had been using their schools as power bases. They had produced elites that sought their own advantage and, perhaps, that of their churches. Though we reject his solution, his analysis is quite correct.

While the nation's poor are largely left to their own desperate devices, the churches exhaust their energies on prestigious building projects because they seek worldly prestige (Alabi). In order to pay for such costly undertakings, the church courts the successful rather than the poor, for the latter cannot pay for such projects. Such ambitions have led the church into a kind of captivity, for who can bite the hand that feeds him? Being in captivity, the church is in no position to even think about helping the poor in the radical way demanded by their plight, for doing so would undermine the ambitions and positions of those now feeding her treasury. Many churches forbid polygamy and will place its practitioners under discipline. We still have to hear of

the church that will place members who practice economic or political “irregularities” under similar disciplinary measures. When one suggests that this be done, Christians take it as a joke and laugh hilariously. It seems that impossible to them, not to say ludicrous. Christians are free to pursue their economic and political interests as their consciences dictate, free from the legalism that the church has adopted in other areas of culture. Like its Western counterpart, that conscience can be very tender with respect to the victims of the politico-economic order and can generate generous donations, but it is usually a donation that in effect serves to make the *status quo* palatable enough to prevent revolution, while it is far removed from the Biblical call for justice.

We are not suggesting that either foreign missions or Nigerian churches have done nothing for the poor. They have built hospitals and chains of village dispensaries. They have organized school systems that the poor have appreciated, even though there is cause for serious criticism of these schools. Churches continue to operate many organs for rural development that are also deeply appreciated by the poor, but, like the efforts in education, these development agencies have served to keep down any potential interest in a Christian type of radical transformation that is so urgently needed. Allow me to expand on this issue.

All governments in Nigeria tend to make grandiose promises to the peasants about providing them with subsidized fertilizers, subsidized tractor hiring services, free medical facilities, subsidized young chicks, including veterinary services for them. Often these are not forthcoming because of financial restraints. But even when the goods have been delivered to a specific local government area, they often

fail to reach the farmer. If they do reach the farmer, it is often via devious routes that include bribery and black market prices. The tractors often end up on the farms of the rich. When the chicks get sick, it is discovered that the medicine supplied is often diluted and even then available only at an “irregular” price. The dispensary and personnel may be there, but the medicine is missing and no one seems ever to know where it is.

Then Christian organizations step in. They will provide alternative dispensaries that are usually well stocked. Christian agricultural agencies provide the fertilizers and other amenities. At first glance, that seems like a good approach. And there is no doubt that rural people on the whole are grateful for such services. The church receives much credit for these efforts and they probably serve to break down many barriers to the Gospel.

In effect, of course, such Christian services take the pressure off the government employees who engage in such systematic stealing. They continue their practices. The voluntary agencies provide just enough alternative services so that the farmers as a group will not become overly bitter and radicalized, but not enough to eliminate the continued need for government services. In the meantime, the church continues to teach obedience to the government and her agencies in the style of the SUM since the beginning.

We are not suggesting that the churches stop providing these services. They do much to alleviate suffering. However, it is a rather superficial method of rural development. The people must be made aware of their rights and power. Instead of teaching a one-sided type of obedience, the church must gather the courage not only to protect

herself against alleged Muslim attempts at suppression, but also to align herself with those who are much more personally oppressed, namely the peasants. No church will in the long run be strong if it is concerned primarily with protecting itself, for life is gained by losing it, according to the Scripture. The context demands that the church proclaim an Amos-like Gospel to the elite. Those in power ought to be reminded that a radical liberation is part of the essence of the Gospel, according to Luke 1:51-53 and 4:18-19, something the SUM always knew but distorted. With respect to the poor, the church must not only speak to or for them, but it must dialogue with them. It must discover together with the poor what the Gospel has to say about oppression and exploitation. The church at this point does not know, for it has inherited a domesticated version of the Gospel that is inadequate for the present situation and, for that matter, always was. The church reads the Bible with thought patterns and elitist eyes that are blind to those teachings to which I refer here (Adegbola).

Some years ago, the Institute of Church and Society (ICS) organized a conference on such issues in Jos and published a report (ICS, 1977), a Hausa version of which is now used in farmers' groups to indicate to them the very strong concern God Himself expresses in the Bible about oppression, His very strong distaste for it and the strong language reserved for it. The point of such meetings is to indicate to farmers that they have good *religious* reason to seek to overcome their situation. They discover from the Bible that the traditional teaching, inherited from missions, about obeying the authorities is one-sided and therefore distorted. These authorities, when *they* fail to obey God, must be called on the carpet. Farmers, especially when acting in concert, have every God-given reason to develop peaceful

but insistent measures to demand respectful treatment. It is not worldliness but godliness for them to drop their fears and lethargy, for Christ has come to break the chains of oppression that bind them and to overthrow the oppressive mighty. One does not need Latin American liberation theology for such a situation; a plain open-minded reading of the Bible should lead to that conclusion (Adegbola; Boer, 1980, 53-69).

Politicians and civil servants have learned from the church what her role is expected to be in the country and they now turn around to remind the church of that role. Some time ago, two very prominent Christians in Plateau State, V.G. Sanda and S.D. Lar, former governor of the state, addressed a meeting of leaders of COCIN. In their speeches they suggested the following role of the church with respect to the government: pray for the rulers and respect them, help spread information the government needs to pass on to the people, help at time of elections and obey the laws of the land (*Saurara, Lamba 2*). The general situation in the country being what it is, the church must recognize a more radical task than that outlined by these two. The church is all too ready to cooperate unconditionally, except where specific and narrowly-defined religious issues arise, just like the earlier missions. Her reward is often invitations to seats of prominence at public occasions to show the public that religious leaders are held in high esteem by the government not only, but also that these leaders support the government. Christians indeed ought to obey the laws and respect political leaders and cooperate. Nevertheless, they ought to place a price tag on their cooperation, namely that of true justice for all, especially for the poor. But a church in bondage to the elite is in a difficult position, while the truly

liberating Word of the Kingdom has yet to penetrate the souls of many members of the elitist-trained church leadership.

Unfortunately, even the churches' development agencies, except for an occasional invitation for the ICS to speak to their farmers' cooperatives, have so far failed to incorporate that most basic aspect of Christian development into their programmes. One missionary of long-standing experience in African rural development, when asked about these concerns, fearfully exclaimed, "But you are introducing politics into the church!" Earlier chapters have shown us where such attitudes lead and no further comment is necessary here.

Indeed, the church in Nigeria is in no better position vis-à-vis our problems than her Western counterpart. The time has come for her to recognize this in order to overcome her hypocritical attitude towards the West, an attitude persistently inculcated by the WCC and UNO with their programmes of selective indignation. We say this not to defend the West – she does not have that much to defend herself – but to indicate that Nigerian Christians are largely in the same boat, perhaps even behind their Western brothers and sisters in their consciousness of justice.

No, the church in Nigeria is not exactly in the same boat, at least not with her British counterpart. She still has many peasants and labourers amongst her members, a class that long ago left the British church. The question is how long such folk will remain with a church under elitist leadership. The peasantry is becoming ripe for any politician daring enough to call a spade a spade and call into radical question the entire politico-economic order. The church ought to learn a lesson from the fact that most military coups in Africa have

been aimed against leaders who classify themselves as Christians. Would the Nigerian Christian community have Old Testament-like prophets within her bosom? If so, the time for such has arrived to step onto the stage in the name of Jesus Christ, whether as a politician or simply as a prophet with no other power but that of the Word of God itself.

Frankly, I am not sure I would dare write all this if it were not for the fact that African church leaders themselves have expressed sentiments very similar. It is clear from the expressions of such leaders that we have not misjudged the situation. Already back in 1974, a retreat of church leaders was held at the ICS. I summarize three of the statements that emerged from that retreat:

The church preaches honesty while she condones corruption in the powerful and influential among her members.

The attention the church pays to her members is in direct proportion to his public importance, while there is lack of sufficient concern for the “common” man.

Though the church occasionally condemns corruption, she continues to “pay respect and give adulation to those leaders ... who have ... by and large forfeited all right to lead.”

All of this finds its echo in an article in the *Nigeria Standard* some eight years later about a retreat (Alabi). Members of the retreat recognized the hypocrisy of “making pious statements” about the poor and that the time for choosing had come. The retreat opted for

the establishment of a Moral Leadership Foundation, but it does not appear that the church as a whole was prepared for such a step, for little or nothing has been heard about it since (ICS, 1974).

In 1976, the General Committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) approved a statement called The Confession of Alexandria, named after the city in which it was drawn up. We quote from the relevant section:

We have spoken against evil when it was convenient. We have often avoided suffering for the sake of others.... We have preferred religiosity to listening to what the Holy Spirit may be whispering to us. We have struggled against colonialism and many other evils, and yet have built up again the things which we had torn down (Galatians 2:18). We confess that we have often been too paternalistic toward others. We have often condoned exploitation and oppression by foreigners. While we have condemned these evils, we have condoned the same things by our own people. We have turned a blind eye to the structures of injustice in our societies, concentrating on the survival of our churches as institutions. We have been a stumbling block for too many. For these and many other sins, we are sorry and ask God to forgive us (AACC, 1976).

Though I am grateful for the insights expressed, the document – like this book perhaps? – is couched in the usual elitist prose in which the church in Africa consistently seeks to clear her conscience without actually starting a programme designed to correct the evils about which she so elegantly weeps. Forgiveness does not come quite that easily or cheaply!

Both in Africa and the West the church needs to hear the Gospel anew, not the one-sided versions of either Evangelicals or Ecumenicals, but the entire Word of God proclaiming the full Kingdom and its righteousness. The Scriptures must be reread with eyes shorn of all dualism and with minds freed from bourgeois-elitist shackles. We challenge all Christians, poor and rich alike, leaders in various spheres of life, to read all the passages in the Bible dealing with oppression and (in)justice (Boer, 1980, 53-69). Let these passages sink deeply into our souls and allow the Holy Spirit to do His renewing work among us, but that will not be realized unless we also open our eyes to our present context, both national and international. We must all ask ourselves how *we* are involved in injustice, in what sense *we* profit from it.

Missionaries or evangelists, whether sent by African or Western churches, must represent a community that has a recognized reputation of standing for the justice of the Kingdom and that offers a viable and practical alternative to capitalism, socialism, elitism and all other –isms, a community that has truly heard that central aspect of the Gospel.

The prophet Amos said it loud and clear: “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.... Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream” (Amos 5:21-24).

Jesus Himself said it no less clearly: “Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at

**feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation" (Mark 12:38-40).**

**Any mission that does not seriously, competently and courageously include these concerns in their programme will bring a truncated Gospel that will continue to foster the kind of situations this study has described. "But according to His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (II Peter 3:13) – wait for it, yes, but not with folded arms. That is not meant to be only a future hope, but also our present deepest desire that motivates us in our daily work now today, not only in our mission outreach, but in our daily occupations.**

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