

THE POLITICO-COLONIAL CONTEXT OF MISSIONS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

The basic circumstance that motivated the organizers to call this conference is the general failure of the Christian community to come to positive terms with the political dimension of life in a way that is consistent with our religion. *Our conference constitutes a search for a positive Christian approach to political life.* In order to develop such an approach, one must understand the obstacles that have so far prevented us from developing one. This paper aims to provide some historical roots underlying our present problems, especially as they apply to the North.

More specifically, this paper is a study of the politico-economic behavior of the Sudan United Mission (SUM), British Branch, a major Protestant mission in Northern Nigeria and one with which the CRC has always been closely associated. It is a mission that has been in the forefront of developing an independent Christian church in the country, one that has been a leader among missions. It is a mission, moreover, for which I have the highest respect.

However, the problems we are treating in this conference call for radical analysis if we are to overcome them. And if it happens that it is precisely at this point that SUM has planted seeds of failure along with those for development, then it will hardly honor her if our respect for her silences us so as to hide the roots of the problem we are investigating and thus hinder us from reaching our goals. It is not too late for SUM and kindred organizations to contribute more positively towards political developments in Nigeria, but then they will have to shed themselves of the factors that have so far inhibited such contributions.

COLONIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Our conference deals with political issues, but this does not mean we should keep out economic concerns. Colonial politics were based on an

economic substructure, for colonialism was at base an economic arrangement. Hence I offer a number of propositions about this economy that will serve to undergird the rest of this paper. I will not defend these propositions here. Those who require such defense are referred to my book *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context*.¹

PROPOSITION 1: The British were primarily and predominantly interested in West Africa not for political reasons, but rather as a source of raw materials and as a market for manufactured goods.

PROPOSITION 2: Colonial government was established only to protect these economic interests when they were threatened by two factors:

(A) Cutthroat competition among foreign firms in Nigeria was creating havoc.²

(B) French and German interests approaching Britain's sphere of interest were supported by their governments. This forced the British government to provide similar protection.³

PROPOSITION 3: Though Lugard, the first governor, disliked the practices listed below, his laissez-faire philosophy hindered him from preventing them. I have in mind such practices as these:

(A) Importation of all manufactured goods.⁴

(B) Increasing profits for the British; decreasing profits for Nigerians.⁵

(C) Refusal to allot Nigerian exporters sufficient space for their cargo.⁶

(D) Undermining budding indigeous industries by selling British products at lower prices.⁷

¹John H. Boer, *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Sudan United Mission*, Amsterdam Studies in Theology, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1979), chps. 2, 5, 7, 9.

²Ibid., pp. 50–57.

³Ibid., pp. 52–57.

⁴F. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 5th ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 512; A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, ed., *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 98; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 59.

⁵F. Lugard, *Mandate*, pp. 479–80, 60, 59, 509; T. F. Burrows to Lugard, Nov. 1, 1918, Lugard Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 74, p. 156 (Rhodes House Library, Oxford University); Kirk-Greene, *Lugard and Amalgamation*, pp. 98, 100; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 58–59.

⁶Kirk-Greene, *Lugard and Amalgamation*, p. 99. Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 59.

⁷T. F. Burrows, "Raw Materials—Nigeria," Sept. 13, 1918, LP, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 74, pp. 57, 48 (Rhodes House Library, Oxford University); E. D. Morel, *Nigeria: Its Peoples and Its problems*, 3rd ed., Cass Library of African Studies (London: Frank Cass, 1968), pp. 120–21 and 232–33; Lugard, *Mandate*, p. 523; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 61–63.

(E) Development of roads, railways, and other means of communication solely in the interest of colonial trade.⁸

PROPOSITION 4: Colonial developments between 1918 and 1945 were characterized by a number of trends:

(A) Though laissez-faire philosophy had lost its attractiveness to many Britains at home, the colonial government in Nigeria continued to practice it. This meant that developments continued to take place only where they would enhance colonial business.⁹

(B) The period is characterized by increasing monopolies. In 1921 there were 104 companies engaged in external commerce; by 1940, two-thirds of West African trade was conducted by seven firms. The United African Company handled some 40 percent of this trade! Cartels were formed that enjoyed official support.¹⁰

(C) There was a progressive elimination of African participants. While Lagosians earlier had extensive external trade links, by the 1940s their share of external trade was down to less than 5 percent.¹¹

(D) Marketing boards were organized to facilitate the growing of cash crops, but they worked almost exclusively with existing channels for the collection and distribution of the products—namely, foreign companies. In fact, these boards served to further entrench these companies by insisting on standards few African firms could meet.¹²

(E) Various factors during World War II encouraged increased

⁸"Lugard and Railway Project in Nigeria," a memorandum, LP, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 74, pp. 205ff. (Rhodes House Library, Oxford University); Lugard, *Mandate*, pp. 461–63; Morel, *Nigeria*, p. 167; J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 56; F. L. Shaw, *A Tropical Dependency* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1905), pp. 496, 592; M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 234; W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972), p. 227; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 63.

⁹R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 207–8; G. H. Meier, "External Trade and Internal Development," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, ed. P. Duignan and L. H. Gann, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969–1975), 4:466; M. Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 374, 376–77, 274, 314, 326–27, 311, 347, 308–10, 302, 320–21, 273–74; A. J. F. Ajayi and I. Espie, eds., *A Thousand Years of West African History: A Handbook for Teachers and Students* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1965), pp. 415–16; C. C. Wrigley, "The Colonial Phase in British West Africa," in Ajayi and Espie, *A Thousand Years*, pp. 427–28, 435, 430–31; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 221–23.

¹⁰Wrigley, "Colonial Phase," pp. 431–32; Rodney, *Underdeveloped Africa*, pp. 169–70; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 224–25.

¹¹Crowder, *West Africa*, pp. 345, 382, 426, 466, 353; Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 252; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 224–25.

¹²Crowder, *West Africa*, p. 493; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 227–28.

Nigerian participation in the economy. Nigerians became especially more active in the retail business. They also earned increased wages as laborers in the new secondary industries.¹³

PROPOSITION 5: In spite of certain efforts on the part of the colonial government after World War II to encourage Nigerian economic efforts, by the time of independence the economy was firmly in the hands of foreigners and the tradition of exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods was still strong. Independence was in name only.¹⁴

PROPOSITION 6: In view of the purpose and structure of colonialism, one might adopt the following description as an accurate summary of its dominant characteristics:

A country is a "colonial" country where the real dynamic is in *foreign* hands, nourished by *foreign* capital, directed by *foreign* personnel, inspired by a *foreign* spirit of enterprise, primarily directed towards *foreign* interests. A "colonial" country is therefore a country . . . of which people and land are, in the last instance, instruments and means for *foreign* purposes, and where *foreign* decisions determine the peoples' destiny.¹⁵

MISSIONARY EVALUATION OF COLONIALISM

Though, as we shall see later, missionaries had some misgivings about colonialism, their basic attitude was one of enthusiastic approval. In order to understand their approval one must comprehend the vision of Africa that missionaries shared with their compatriots. It was a dismal picture of utter darkness without any redeeming features at all. Karl Kumm, the founder of the SUM, spoke for all his people, not only missionaries, when 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 souls—the great Land of Darkness."¹⁶ Statements like this abounded in missionary literature at the beginning of our century.

The basic cause for this unspeakable degradation was located in

¹³Coleman, *Nigeria*, pp. 253, 231, 255; Crowder, *West Africa*, pp. 491, 494–95; Wrigley, "Colonial Phase," p. 437; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 229–30.

¹⁴*West African Pilot*, Sept. 30, 1960; Oct. 1, 1960; July 14, 1960; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 331–32.

¹⁵H. Kraemer, *World Cultures and World Religions: The Coming Dialogue* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), p. 65; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 49.

¹⁶H. K. W. Kumm, *The Sudan: A Short Compendium of Facts and Figures about the Land of Darkness* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1907), p. 15; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 125.

slavery and the slave trade. The reference by this time—the beginning of our century—was not the transatlantic trade, of course, but rather that practiced by Arabs and other Muslims. Kumm wrote of the curse of Ham that had been Africa's "woe." In fact, "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. . . ." ¹⁷ He wrote of emirs sending slave raiders into their territories in order to collect annual tribute and in the process destroying, killing, enslaving, and utterly devastating large areas. "I have known close on five thousand square miles of territory absolutely depopulated by the ruling emirs," Kumm wrote. 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.*" ¹⁸ Kumm, in his attempts to get his Christian compatriots interested in missions to Black Africa, never tired of heaping up superlatives to describe what Livingstone called "hell," the place where "Satan has his seat." ¹⁹

In contrast to Africa, Europe was seen as the haven of light, liberty, and civilization. In this, too, missionaries were no different from their constituency. Writing about the three main Protestant nations, America, Germany, and Great Britain, Kumm insisted that they "became what they were through the Bible and Christian influence," ²⁰ an assertion of which he and other missionaries never tired. Northern Nigeria needed an education based on "Christian European principles." ²¹ There was a need to "uphold the integrity and humanity of ideals of which Christian civilized nations of Europe are so justly proud." ²² Kumm saw the British empire as "an empire utterly different from the previous," for it was characterized by "red chains of brotherly love." Indeed, "freedom and justice will rove themselves stronger than steel

¹⁷*The Lightbearer* (hereafter LB), June, 1908, p. 123; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 127.

¹⁸LB, January, 1907, p. 12, italics original. Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 127.

¹⁹J. Van Den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus' Love: An Inquiry into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen: Kok, 1956), p. 80; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 127, 95.

²⁰H. K. W. Kumm, *Khont-Hon-Nofer: The Lands of Ethiopia* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1910), p. 7; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 129.

²¹Kumm, *The Sudan*, p. 105; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 129.

²²H. K. W. Kumm, *From Hausaland to Egypt through the Sudan* (London: Constable and Co., 1910), p. 65; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 129.

or gold."²³ He attributed the highest virtues to the West, especially liberty and justice. Within the West, Britain was the purest example of these virtues: she outshone all other nations: "justice, truthfulness, honesty and liberty are valued more highly in Britain than in any other state on earth. . . ." ²⁴

Closely related to the contrast between a virtuous West and a degraded Africa was a strong feeling of paternalism. In one of his books, Kumm entitled a chapter "The Baby Nations of the World." Africa's heathen clans "are in our hands as little children whose fate . . . we may make or mar." On the other hand, the European race was seen as fully adult. The latter "is today in the full strength of its manhood, while in Africa . . . we have the infants of our human family."²⁵

The distinctions between Europe and Africa, however, were not seen by Kumm and others as inherent; the distinctions came from difference in exposure to the gospel. One missionary, 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.²⁶ Eventually, Africans would reach the same heights as had the Europeans.

It was only a small step from such attitudes to approval of the colonial enterprise as a divine task imposed upon the Christian West by God himself. Africa had to be brought into the kingdom of God. Missions and colonialism were thus lumped together. Kumm warned Britain 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.²⁷

²³LB, February, 1907, pp. 44–46; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 129.

²⁴Kumm, *Khont*, p. 15; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 130.

²⁵Kumm, *Khont*, pp. 4, 14–15; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 131.

²⁶LB, March, 1911, p. 58; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 168.

²⁷Kumm, *Khont*, p. 14; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 133.

Why? 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. . . ." ²⁸ Missionary Rooker represented the ideology with a good deal 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 water? O 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. ²⁹

It was all well within God's plan to establish his kingdom. "The natives of the Sudan," we are told, "have come under our rule, so that we . . . might bring them under the rule of the kingdom of God. So shall 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.' " ³⁰ If this was no identification of the two kingdoms, the line of demarcation became at least very blurred. A completed railway in the Sudan was interpreted 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." ³¹

As colonial developments continued to unfold, the mission continued to adhere to this ideology. During the interwar years, the rhetoric was reduced considerably, but the basic notions were retained. It continued to be the mission's purpose "to lead whole nations into light and liberty, and to shape aright their future." Any movement sharing that purpose was considered an ally in the deepest sense, and that surely included the colonial effort. If Ruxton, a converted ex-colonial officer formerly hostile to missions, did not intend an actual identification in the following statement, his remark was certainly suggestive in that direction: "May the kingdom of our God . . . be extended in our time over all the peoples of Africa . . . to His glory, their salvation, and England's honour." ³²

It is clear from the above what it was that made colonialism attractive to these missionaries and why they supported it. The features they

²⁸Kumm, *Khont*, p. 15; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 133.

²⁹LB, March, 1911, p. 59; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 171.

³⁰LB, August, 1909, p. 163; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 176.

³¹LB, August, 1909, p. 167; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 176–77.

³²LB, March, 1934, p. 26; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 266.

recognized as central were, among others, the elimination of the slave trade and the establishment of the *Pax Britannica*, which spelled “peace, justice, and prosperity.” Pioneer missionary Maxwell summarized it 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. . . .”³³

He was especially struck by the initial depopulation of the towns. Formerly, farmers had to live in the safety of the towns, but now they began to live closer to their farms. The walls of the towns were falling into disrepair, for they were no longer needed. Maxwell commented: “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 little short of inhuman for Great Britain to leave the unfortunate place to the misgovernment of its . . . rulers.”³⁴ The theme of liberty and justice was prominent in missionary literature. In an effort to enlist others for missionary service, SUM testified that “oppression, tyranny and the slave trade have received . . . their deathblow, and an oppressed people are now free.”³⁵

Colonial economics also had the stamp of SUM’s approval. Missionaries devoted many articles to the subject. Basically there was deep appreciation for the direction of the economy. It was important to SUM that Nigerians profited from it. Maxwell cited the example of a single village where £2,000 worth of oil seeds were bought by two trading firms in one month. All that money or barter goods was earned on the local farms. And that, he informed his readers, “was only one place. Before British occupation, such volume of trade was practically impossible.”³⁶ Maxwell was similarly positive with respect to the development by private enterprise of the Plateau tin mines and the coal mines in the South. Referring to the shift from slave trade to palm oil, he remarked, “Thus . . . the path of righteousness proved in the end more profitable than the path of self-interest and wrong.”³⁷ This approval persisted right up to independence.

Concerning developments in East Africa, missionary Harris reported that “at the present time both politics and economics favour the

³³LB, October, 1910, p. 193; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 149.

³⁴LB, October, 1910, pp. 192–93; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 148–49.

³⁵Sudan Pioneer Mission, Minute Book No. 1, December 29, 1903; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 171–72.

³⁶J. L. Maxwell, *Nigeria: The Land, the People and Christian Progress* (London: World Dominion Press, n.d.), pp. 58–59.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 52, 46.

development of Christianity." Christianity, he affirmed was "partly responsible for the progress Africans welcome."³⁸

Founder Kumm shared the government's ideas for undercutting existing local industries. He favored the division of labor that allocated to Africa the roles of export supplier of raw materials and import market for manufactured goods. He suggested that Africans involved in the spinning, weaving, and dyeing industries should be set "free" for cultivation of cotton by importing cheaper and better British finished products.³⁹ Hard though this may be for us to understand, Kumm supported such schemes in the firm conviction that they were best for Africa.

Behind his suggestions was a heart deeply conscious of the divine mandate. The developments he proposed were his response to this mandate, and they assumed an identity of African and European interests and, eventually, a mutual profit. He never lost sight of the fact that all these resources belonged primarily to Africa. To misappropriate them would be theft and failure to obey the mandate of trust.⁴⁰

A purely exploitative relationship that would benefit only the British was against all intentions of SUM. The entire colonial enterprise was seen in terms of the identification of African and European interests. The proposals with which the Western Christian community would now most hastily part company could in those years be calmly suggested as useful strategy for carrying out a divinely imposed mandate of liberating Africa. 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 be treated; that he should have his reward; that his welfare should be increased as well as ours."⁴¹ The editor of LB included many articles on the economy, because such matters were thought to be of interest to the constituency: "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 interest of those in Nigeria who have come under British rule."⁴²

Obviously, SUM had no reason to be embarrassed about the colonial

³⁸LB, September, 1955, p. 116; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 386.

³⁹Kumm, *The Sudan*, p. 171; Kumm, *Hausaland*, p. 253; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 135.

⁴⁰Kumm, *Hausaland*, p. 229; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 135.

⁴¹LB, March, 1908, p. 53; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 176.

⁴²LB, June, 1906, p. 12; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 176.

connection. In fact, together with other missions, she capitalized on these connections in her promotion efforts. LB frequently referred to the fact that missions helped establish colonialism in a way no army could do. Missions were seen as preparatory for colonialism 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 local folk. 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 faith in Christ." The mission's task was to ". . . apply our minds to the organization of the spiritual affairs of these places and peoples so as to ensure their peaceful and permanent development. It is therefore incumbent upon us to occupy strategic positions . . . that will allay the advance of Mohammedanism or counteract it."⁴³ Should Islam gain the upper hand, "this may mean . . . the stagnation of European civilization. . . . Missions must assist "the magnificent work our Government is doing today in these lands" and thus help "avert the threatened danger."⁴⁴ Indeed, numerous were the boasts of the political and economic necessity of missions. Ruxton wrote of missions as "a political necessity for the maintenance of the Commonwealth."⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

After all this, one will not be surprised at the instructions to SUM missionaries from headquarters that they exercise full cooperation with the government, especially ". . . that agents of the S.U.M. should endeavour to inculcate in the minds of their neighbours . . . principles of loyalty to the Government and obedience to its demands 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."⁴⁷

⁴³Kumm, *Khont*, pp. 229–30; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 136–37.

⁴⁴Kumm, *Hausaland*, p. 270; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 137.

⁴⁵LB, March, 1934, p. 26; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 266–67.

⁴⁶LB, September, 1933, p. 101; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 302.

⁴⁷English Council Minute Book No. 1, p. 179; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 185.

When one tries to present a provisional explanation of these missionary policies and theories, it is difficult for us in the 1980s to be fair. However, the provisional explanation that follows represents a real and earnest component of missionary thinking. Kumm more than once expressed his expectation that colonialism would one day help Africa "occupy a responsible and respected position in the council of nations, the parliament of mankind."⁴⁸ This remained the serious goal of SUM right up to independence. Though the mission was deeply mistrustful of nationalism and thoroughly misunderstood it, it nevertheless affirmed the desire of Nigerians to manage their own affairs as a "very healthy sign, for it is a sign of growth." The mission's official expressions of joy and fulfillment at independence were a natural result of her deepest hopes from the beginning. Farrant, a giant among missionary strategists in the North, wrote, "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" in seeing colonial nations "attain to full stature as nations."⁴⁹ In the mission's view, Nigerian independence was the crowning achievement of colonialism and validated it.

After all this, it is well to summarize SUM's definition of colonialism. The definition was never made explicit, but it is possible to arrive at an implicit definition from which SUM never swerved:

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.⁵⁰

The difference between this definition and the one of Siegfried and Kraemer given above (under Proposition 6) is striking. They seem to define two totally different situations. One of the aims of the rest of this paper is to explain that difference.

AREAS OF FRICTION WITH THE COLONIAL REGIME

The above section describes the attitude of SUM towards colonialism. It should not lead us to expect that the mission accepted the

⁴⁸Kumm, *Khont*, p. 197.

⁴⁹H. G. Farrant, *Crescendo of the Cross* (London: SUM, n.d.), pp. 15, 70, 69.

⁵⁰Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 218.

practices of the colonial regime as wholeheartedly as the theory behind it. There were several areas of government/mission friction from early on right up to the time of Nigerian independence. Without going into details, I present them here not only to give a balanced picture, but also because it will help us understand the political stance of the mission.

There were three issues on which the mission opposed the government, but which were short-term. These were: (1) colonial forced labor which was used in German Adamawa as well as in East Africa;⁵¹ (2) restrictions placed on Blacks in South Africa;⁵² and (3) trade in cheap gin.⁵³ All three of these issues involved the mission in ecumenical and political activities within Africa as well as at the home front.

The fourth and by far the largest issue creating friction was that of government-imposed limitations on mission work among Muslims. The problem took many shapes and cropped up in many different places. The colonial government was accused of aiding the spread of Islam and of generally favoring Muslims over against Christians.

On this issue SUM, together with sister missions, countered the government at many different fronts throughout the colonial period. Extensive articles were written in *LB*; ecumenical resolutions were published; memoranda were written for high government officials; many face-to-face confrontations occurred between mission and government officials. Occasionally threats of political pressures at home were made. It is altogether very clear that the mission was in no way afraid to face the government on issues it considered necessary.⁵⁴

How can one square these frictions with the ideological and practical support the missions rendered to colonialism? The answer, in short, is that these government practices were not regarded as expressions of colonialism. These practices did not measure up to the implicit definition of colonialism with which missions operated.

We do not need to go into the many areas of cooperation between missions and colonial government, especially in education and health care.⁵⁵ However, it should be understood that these cooperative ventures were severely marred by the above frictions. All cooperation became hesitant, primarily because of the divergent purposes of the two partners. It should also be recorded that these frictions never led to reconsideration of the colonial idea itself.

⁵¹Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 140, 273.

⁵²Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 273-74.

⁵³Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 15, 26, 32, 51, 53, 140, 187ff., 255, 269.

⁵⁴Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 143, 160, 205, 286ff., 303ff., 316ff., 397ff.

⁵⁵Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 157, 162, 192, 279ff., 283ff., 303, 320, 394ff., 396.

MISSIONARY ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICS

The first fact to be observed is that SUM and most of her sister organizations never gave systematic or professional thought to politics. Though it was impossible for them to escape politics entirely, their interest was not basically political. In fact, as far as the missions were concerned, the issues central to this conference were peripheral and not infrequently hostile to the missions' primary focus. Nevertheless, one can detect a pattern in missionary attitudes towards politics.

That pattern was based on at least three factors, all of which are in turn closely related to each other: (1) a "gut" reaction to political issues that was an instinctive response of the evangelical soul; (2) an attitude towards colonialism that determined missionary response to political realities; and (3) a pragmatic adjustment based not on a systematic and responsible study of politico-economic realities, but, rather, on the first two factors.

One important element of the pattern that SUM shared with other missions was her insistence on keeping out of politics. Missionary Bristow represented the prevailing view: "Missionary societies in the Sudan have very wisely avoided politics, and have no intention of entering into them."⁵⁶ However, at least one missionary, Veary (of the Canadian branch in Chad), conceded that at least with respect to French Equatorial Africa it would be impossible for a large mission "to remain outside these political developments. . . ."⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the ideal was clear. The primary reason for this ideal was not opposition to politics so much as the feeling that the main task of missions is a religious one. Bristow did suggest an important political task in keeping with the purpose of missions: "It behooves us all to give adequate thought and prayer to such an important matter," he wrote.⁵⁸

As Nigerian politics heated up in preparation for independence, more than one missionary lamented the fact that Nigerian Christians were so ill-prepared to face the challenge. Christians in the Plateau area were largely oblivious of the political developments about them and there was real danger during the 1950s that they would end up with no representation in an independent government. Bristow, the mission's educational architect, regretfully observed that "the people would have been in a better position if the missions had not been so reluctant to venture upon an educational programme," for they would have be-

⁵⁶LB July, 1950, p. 72; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 390-91.

⁵⁷LB, November, 1952, p. 114; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

⁵⁸LB, July, 1950, p. 72; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390; see also pp. 106, 457.

come politically more alert.⁵⁹ Thus, education was recognized to be useful for encouraging political expertise. For political reasons, missionary Potter favored a union church that would include all the denominations spawned by SUM, for such a union church would give the church more political clout.⁶⁰ At least two missionaries in this period, then, were to some extent prepared to harness even the schools and churches into political service.

In fact, indications of a positive political interest on the part of SUM are many. *LB*, for example, contained many articles dealing with political issues. Characteristic titles are "Christian Influence in Government," "New Constitution for Nigeria," "Nigerian Riots," "The Church and Politics in French Chad," "Another Step in Nigeria's Independence," "Self-government in Nigeria," "Nigeria: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means to Allaying Them." In addition, the annual reports bristle with political information.⁶¹

SUM furthermore expressed itself positively concerning the few Christians who had entered politics. When Pastor David Lot was elected to political office, missionaries did not hide their appreciation. The report for 1951 referred to Lot: "We thank God for men of such calibre in the Government . . . in these early, important and formative years of self-government."⁶² Elsewhere we read, "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."⁶³ When Lot and a Christian from another mission came to London for constitutional negotiations, SUM arranged a reception for their constituency to meet the two. When Lot became Minister without Portfolio, the editor of *LB* again expressed his delight and congratulated him.⁶⁴ H. G. Farrant also appreciated the discussions within the Northern Missions Council (NMC) and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) on political affairs in Adamawa.

Farrant especially was very conscious of the importance of Christian presence in political quarters. From Paul he learned "that there should be a vital, competent witness in seats of authority and in places where

⁵⁹*LB*, July, 1950, pp. 71-72; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 392.

⁶⁰*LB*, July, 1951, p. 47; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 392.

⁶¹Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

⁶²Boxfile with miscellaneous papers in SUM archives; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

⁶³*LB*, March, 1952, p. 30; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

⁶⁴*LB*, March, 1955, p. 26; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

policies are made." He was aware of a common criticism that Evangelicals tend to work at the circumference while neglecting the center of society.⁶⁵

It was generally realized by observers that Christians would for the time being constitute a small minority among politicians. However, their small number could and should be outweighed by certain Christian virtues, which, if adhered to, would render them a powerful factor. These virtues, according to Bristow, were those of wisdom, honesty, and truthfulness.⁶⁶

Armed with such virtues, Christian politicians had one major task, namely, to safeguard Christian interests. These interests, missionaries judged, were threatened by a militant Muslim community aided by the colonial government. Almost from the beginning, missionaries were preoccupied with this issue. In fact, during the 1950s it was precisely this issue in the constitutional debate that led to the vital political interest of the mission.

Interest gave birth to action: on this issue of religious freedom in the constitution the mission consciously forsook its policy not to act politically. *LB* contains numerous articles on the subject. It was agreed to raise a "strong voice" regarding minority rights. All avenues were to be explored, including CCN, African church leaders, and institutions in the UK. When someone raised the question 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.⁶⁷ It was decided to bring the concern to NMC "to get assurance that northern Nigerian non-Moslem minorities will have adequate representation in the various Houses. Use may be made of any relevant avenue, including those at home."⁶⁸

Farrant was second to none in championing the rights of minorities, especially of Christians. He was interested in constitutional safeguards for such freedoms, but he was also deeply aware that such provisions constitute no guarantee. "It looks well to have safeguards written into a constitution," he warned, "but they can be ignored or misinterpreted by a government. . . ." He suggested that "the most reliable protection for a minority is its own strength of character and stability of purpose." As far as Northern Nigerian Christians go, "their progress will depend

⁶⁵*LB*, May, 1959, p. 39 and July, 1959, p. 57; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 408ff.

⁶⁶*LB*, July, 1950, p. 72; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 391.

⁶⁷Regional Field Council of the Nigerian Branches, March 2-4, 1950, "Field Council, 1941-1951" in SUM archives; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 393.

⁶⁸Field Council of the Nigerian Branches, February 12-14, 1951; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 393.

much more upon their fidelity to Christ than on safeguards in the Constitution."⁶⁹

In spite of all these evidences of missionary interest in politics, the church's sons with political leanings, David Lot and Azi Nyako, both testify that they received no help from missionaries. Rather, they experienced a negative attitude on the part of missionaries. Lot confides that though he was close to the missionaries, he was not able to discuss political issues with them. At that level he drew a blank.⁷⁰ In fact he claims that he had never seen a Christian book dealing with politics until recently when this author gave him one.

An important indication of the mission's political acumen lay in its attitude towards *nationalism*. Nationalism was, of course, a reaction to colonialism. An early expression of Nigerian nationalism was opposition to the imposition of colonialism. During the early period, Maxwell thought that the reason some Nigerians opposed colonialism was sheer ignorance of its benefits. Once they understood, he prophesied, they would "submit to the imposition of peace, justice, and prosperity." He thought it "curious that they have to have these things imposed on them. . . ."⁷¹ During those early years, Maxwell referred to the religious movement of Garrick Sokari Braide, alias Elijah, who preached that British power had come to an end. The missionaries described the effort as a "dangerous movement, whose leader declared that power was passing from the whites to the coloured people."⁷²

Another opinion saw nationalism as a basically neutral 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."⁷³ It could also turn against the advance of the kingdom if nationalists should come to identify Christ with the West. In view of this awareness of the potential of nationalism, it is very strange indeed that SUM never officially took

⁶⁹LB, September, 1957, p. 87; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 409.

⁷⁰Interviews with Lot, *Sunday Standard*, Sept. 17, 1978; P. Abrecht, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 104; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 460.

⁷¹J. L. Maxwell, *Diaries*, MSS Afr. s. 1112 (Rhodes House Library, Oxford University), vol. 1, p. 60; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 152.

⁷²J. B. Grimley and G. E. Robinson, *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 301-3; J. L. Maxwell, *Half a Century of Grace: A Jubilee History of the Sudan United Mission* (London: SUM, n.d.), p. 119; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 152ff.

⁷³LB, February, 1909, p. 45; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 216ff.

upon herself the task of influencing the nationalist movement—or even of listening to it!

At the close of World War I, Farrant predicted a nationalistic awakening that would require “careful handling,” for “awakening spells revolt.” However, he theorized, as long as there was “understanding and sympathy between ruler and the ruled, awakening would mean strength and power to the whole.” 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.⁷⁴

At the end of World War II, Farrant affirmed that Northern Nigeria had awakened from a primitive state “to take its part in world affairs,” a stage for which the entire missionary movement had been waiting. Nigeria was disturbed because “a new set of conditions have come into being” that bring with them “unusual opportunities” for the gospel.⁷⁵ The reference here is to nationalist stirring. In spite of Farrant’s theoretical approval, he did not take kindly to nationalist expressions in the newspapers. He wrote that the government was interested in the Hausa weekly, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, because of “the near-seditious tone of a considerable part of the [other] Nigerian newspapers. . . .” (Farrant knew the reason for government interest in this particular weekly, since he served on its board.) He described the other newspapers as having “a terrific black versus white complex.” The “worst of them (and the cleverest)” was the Zikist *West African Pilot*. At the same time (1944) that Farrant wrote the above, he commented on a nationalist meeting in Lagos that passed a resolution by acclamation for self-government in fifteen 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 quarter.”⁷⁶

Farrant’s opinions were fairly representative; we do not need to review all the opinions of his colleagues. Still, a few additional comments are in order. Bristow recognized two types of nationalists, a “more stable” type 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

⁷⁴LB, March, 1918, pp. 43–44; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 216.

⁷⁵Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 301, 298.

⁷⁶“A.M.R.M. and Other Field Correspondences left by Mr. Dawson,” March 18, 1944, archive bundle; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 301–2.

immediately."⁷⁷ In the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, anti-British emotions were fanned by extremists, but "the more responsible men" reacted strongly against the movement.⁷⁸ Similarly, Veary 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."⁷⁹

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."⁸⁰ It was often seen as at least partially 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 increasing opposition of the forces of materialism, nationalism, Communism, and Roman Catholicism."⁸¹ In an article entitled "Literature—Christian or Communist?" nationalism is shown as clearly opposed to the former and inspired by the latter.⁸² The Nigerian riots of 1949 were reckoned a "by-product of Cominform agitation through adjacent French Equatorial Africa."⁸³ Indeed, a number of lengthy articles in the early '50s featured the communist movement and its relationship to nationalism and independence in French Equatorial Africa, as well as its destructive influence upon the church.⁸⁴

In these articles the emphasis is on the danger of communist nationalism to the church, while little attention is paid to the underlying cause of such movements.⁸⁵ Neither was there much discussion as to how to combat communism. The Field Council of all the SUM branches working in Nigeria did commission someone to write a booklet on

⁷⁷LB, July, 1950, p. 71; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, pp. 388–89.

⁷⁸LB, November, 1953, p. 138; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 389.

⁷⁹LB, November, 1953, p. 135; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 389.

⁸⁰LB, November, 1952, p. 102, Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸¹LB, November, 1952, p. 95; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸²LB, May, 1955, p. 53; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸³LB, April, 1950, p. 25; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸⁴LB, April, 1950, p. 25; July, 1950, p. 62; November, 1952, pp. 113–14; March, 1956, pp. 36–37; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸⁵Veary, it must be conceded, 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." LB, July, 1950, p. 62; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

"Communism and Christianity," which was translated into Hausa and distributed widely and freely.⁸⁶ In it grateful recognition was accorded to the efforts of certain British publishers in producing literature to counteract communism, but, the author cautioned, "there is also the great need of definite spiritual literature suitable for our African Christians." The real need of the hour to meet the various challenges, including communist nationalism, was "Holy Ghost power working in and through missionaries and Africans alike."⁸⁷

POLITICAL PATTERN ANALYSIS

We see two dominant positions in the conscious political thinking of SUM. One position relates to Islam. Though the mission never went out of its way to help Christians come to a conscious political stance, at least in general and in theory it tended to take a hospitable view of political participation on the part of Nigerian Christians. The aim of such Christian political sanction was mainly to safeguard the interests of the Christian community against alleged Muslim threats. Christians in politics were to oppose the injustices the mission perceived as coming from the Muslim community.

I have no doubt that such opposition to injustice was a legitimate concern; whether it was a sufficient political vision is another question. In fact, I am convinced that the mission was instrumental in forcing Christian political thought and action into a procrustean bed that continues to create problems today. Christian political interest must not be narrowed down to a safeguarding of its own private interests, though such safeguarding is a legitimate component of politics. After all, the Bible teaches clearly that life is gained by being prepared to lose it, and it is paradoxically lost when one is too concerned with its retention. Thus though this safeguarding was a legitimate concern, restricting political concern to this narrow focus in a country where the church had perfect freedom to deal with wider issues as well is definitely one reason Nigerian Christians have not had a very positive Christian approach to political life. With apologies to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), it can hardly be denied that CAN is basically active only whenever it perceives a Muslim threat. Between such crises CAN has been largely dormant. This approach is so similar

⁸⁶Regional Field Council of the Nigerian Branches, February 12–14, 1951, filebox "Field Council, 1941–1951"; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

⁸⁷LB, November, 1952, pp. 101–2; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 390.

to that of missions that one can hardly help suspecting a causal relationship. We have not freed ourselves from this negative heritage, though I hope that this conference will be an important initial step towards claiming our responsibility in this area. CAN, being our sponsor, must thus also be credited with providing this forum, though it was not the initiator.

The second position relates to nationalism. How can one explain the fact that while the mission held a positive, though restricted, attitude towards politics and independence she was nevertheless very hesitant about nationalism? After all, more than a few individual missionaries were opposed to the movement and classified it with groups that were seen only in negative terms, such as communists and labor unions.

The problem with nationalists from the SUM point of view was that even though many insisted on being Christian they attacked what SUM considered to be God's gift to Nigeria: colonialism. Opposing colonialism was opposing God's plan. Criticism of colonialism because of its economic exploitation was not understood, for the mission was largely oblivious to the problems a capitalistic order caused for the country, since missions never bothered to do a systemic professional analysis of the systemic causes of nationalism or the complaints of its proponents. The opposing definitions of colonialism with which missions and nationalists operated, and from which neither ever budged, made a clash at this front inevitable. The mission could not possibly comprehend the cries of injustice on the part of nationalists that were aimed at an order that was defined precisely as a bulwark of justice and liberty.

The church's teaching was basically determined by the majority of her missionaries. The emphasis was bound to be one that favored the status quo: in support of colonialism/capitalism. The church was taught the injustices of Islam and the virtues of capitalism. One must concede that the latter was taught not so much as a clearly delineated philosophy (for these missions tended to be blissfully ignorant), but rather through osmosis. The system was generally praised and recommended as having brought liberty and justice to a previously dark continent. It must be remembered, of course, that this emphasis, though it militated against nationalism, appreciated independence as the crowning achievement and justification of colonialism. It must also be realized that the mission/church was hardly aware of the economic shackles that remained with the coming of political independence.

While the mission largely opposed nationalism, in spite of her yearn-

ing for national independence, her educational ministry had as one of its main goals the preparation of Nigerians to serve in government and company posts. This was squarely within the vision so far described. Colonialists hired Muslims to serve in government and companies because they were a more literate part of the population. Supplying Christian manpower fit into the missionary strategy to restrain the Muslim advance under colonialism. Second, the policy served to bolster the colonial setup that was suffering from insufficient manpower. The result was, of course, an education that taught hardly anyone to be critical of colonial capitalism. Education was supportive of the colonial status quo. This feature also served to bolster the mission policy of inculcating loyalty and obedience towards the regime.

SOCIO-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

What lay behind all this? How could a mission so eager to spread the good news become a tool of a new form of slavery that went under the name of liberation? It looks so much like hypocrisy; in fact it was not. It was something worse: blindness that resulted from a fatal combination of class mentality and dualism. Let me explain.

As to the former, the constituency of SUM in the UK was caught up in the capitalist mentality. That constituency had profited greatly from the capitalist order. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century it found itself largely at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, the evangelical mentality provided it with just the right mental and psychological characteristics to enable it by the close of the period to reach the top. Human nature being what it is, such a constituency is not likely to reject a politico-economic order from which it has so profited. Instead, it is more likely that it will adopt an ideology that will justify the order—evangelicalism providing just that kind of justification. Evangelicals, for all the attention they paid to the well-being of souls and even to society in the name of Christ, had no inherent resistance to this ideology.

Why was it that the Bible did not provide Evangelicals with such resistance? One does not need to be a scholar to see that it opposes many of the colonial practices we have described. On what basis could missionaries justify their policies? That basis, I submit, has its source far in the depth of the history of the church. The single name we reserve for it is dualism. I have sought to explain the roots of dualism elsewhere (*Missionary Messengers*, pp. 446ff.) and it would take us too far afield to explain it all over again. As to its history, let us be satisfied

with the statement that the classical formulation of this dualism is identified with Thomas Aquinas and that a variety of it got into the evangelical movement via Luther and Pietism.

As to the nature of this dualism, 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 natural laws of thought and action.⁸⁸

R. H. 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 political thought, that . . . its precarious philosophical basis . . . [is] commonly forgotten."⁸⁹

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, social, and economic participation in their various cultures. 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."⁹⁰

Primarily because of two of its features such dualism prevented Evangelicals from submitting capitalism and, therefore, colonialism to biblical scrutiny:

(1) Dualism accepts the dominant Western philosophical tradition of

⁸⁸H. R. Rookmaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 34–35; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 453.

⁸⁹R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1962), p. 279; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 453.

⁹⁰Tawney, *Religion and Capitalism*, pp. 279, 35; Boer, *Missionary Messengers*, p. 453.

rationalism in the so-called secular area of life. Human reason is the sufficient source of knowledge; the input of the Bible is not needed. Human reason at that level is not corrupted by sin. It is only at the religious level that the Bible is needed, for there human reason is hopelessly corrupt and insufficient.

(2) This form of dualism posits a two-tier structure in which the religious/spiritual area is superior to the secular/material area. Both are created by God, but God is more interested in the spiritual than in the material.

Usually, when confronted with this dualism, Evangelicals will reject it, but its actual force in their lives cannot be denied. As Tawney writes, it is so fundamental a part of Western thought, including Evangelical thought, that no one realizes it unless he has had the privilege of doing research in such affairs.

These two features have resulted in two characteristics of Evangelical missions. In the first place, they have unreflectingly married the gospel to an economic order that was the product of autonomous Western philosophy and have failed to recognize the basic tension between that order and the gospel. This marriage was inherited by the Nigerian church and is the reason so many Christians feel comfortable in the capitalist way. It also prevents church leadership from teaching and disciplining its members who have made the grade within this system or are attempting to make it. The church has been given no biblical analytical tools to help her understand the current situation from a Christian perspective. Our Muslim neighbors see our religion as being concerned only with spiritual affairs—even though there is no justification in the Bible for such an attitude—and they are right.

Second, since the spiritual world was considered more urgent and more important than the material/secular world, missions were not inclined to spend much time or many resources on matters of secondary importance. They emphasized the spiritual and devoted most of their energies to it. They saw no reason to pay a great deal of attention to politico-economic affairs, let alone engage in professional analysis. They could hardly understand the warnings of Christian prophets in the UK or of West African nationalists, for the concerns of these groups, if taken seriously, would deflect missionaries from their spiritual task. Thus even the analysis that was done and published by contemporary fellow Christians was misunderstood by the Evangelicals. Hence the Nigerian church was closed to nationalist concerns as well, losing many of her nationalistic sons and daughters who grew

impatient with a gospel that had no relevance to their deepest yearnings.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian church has inherited the dualistic mentality of the missionaries. The greatest heritage of missions is the Bible and the church, and it would be un-Christian to find fault with that heritage. The Nigerian church, however, now struggles with problems it hardly understands because of the dualist mentality it has inherited along with the Bible—a mentality that is actually opposed to the Bible, as well as to African tradition and Islam. Until recently the Nigerian church believed that Christians should not be in politics, for that is the lower world of the material; we should be spiritual. Now that we have accepted political responsibility because of Muslim pressures—not because of a better reading of the Bible—we find that few are prepared to follow Christ in politics. The following features are now characteristic of us as a Christian community:

(1) We are on guard with respect to perceived Muslim threats. Here we are wide awake and rightly so.

(2) We are a community shackled to the capitalistic order. We are proud of our sons and daughters who do well in the system, even though we all suspect strongly that success is usually the result of compromise of, if not outright disobedience to, Christian principles.

(3) We publish our periodic communiques against various forms of corruption in high places, but we are careful never to mention names, places, and dates, for that would bring us too close to home.

(4) We moralize and teach obedience while we fail to analyze the system(s) within which we live and work. What about our participation in transnational corporations? What about the Green Revolution? Do these benefit the poor for whom Christ came in a special way (Luke 1:51–53 and 4:18)?

(5) We discipline believers from among the poor for breaches of personal morality, but I have yet to hear of a church that subjects a prominent member who is thought to have been involved in political or economic “irregularities” to the same disciplinary process.

The basic problems I have discussed above can be traced partially to their historical roots in missions. I hasten to add, however, that these roots, though their analysis should help us in understanding our problems, no longer constitute a sufficient excuse for us to continue on the traditional paths. We ought to be thankful for the gospel and the

church, but we must work towards overcoming these very serious negative aspects of our Christian heritage. We have the scriptures and we have our Christian experts, many of whom should be at this conference. It is my prayer that this conference will help move us beyond our history to positive new measures that will guide us towards a distinctively Christian vision and that will no longer tolerate complicity in unjust practices and structures.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CAN Christian Association of Nigeria (The youngest but widest ecumenical body in Nigeria including Roman Catholics, Evangelical Churches of West Africa, and a number of so-called independent churches)
- CCN Christian Council of Nigeria (The oldest and dominant Protestant ecumenical body)
- LB *The Lightbearer* (The official publication of the SUM)
- LP Lugard Papers. (Documents in Rhodes House Library, Oxford University)
- NMC Northern Missions Council
- SUM Sudan United Mission