

Texts of Henry Martyn Lectures 1999

given at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge

on 25, 26, 28 October 1999

"Mission and Empire: The Ambiguous Mandate of Bishop Crowther"

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- **Lecture I: Philanthropy in Sierra Leone**

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*Jacob F. Ade Ajayi**

Introduction

I wonder if the Director of the Henry Martyn Centre knew what risk he was taking when he asked me to speak about Bishop Crowther as part of the celebration of the second centenary of the founding of the CMS. Crowther Hall, possibly his only memorial in this country, commissioned an author to write a play on the life of the Bishop for the centenary celebrations. But when the CMS saw the play, they decided that it must not be published because a dramatic presentation of the Onitsha Finance Committee of August 1890 at which Crowther was forced to resign would be embarrassing, and would damage rather than enhance the image of the CMS. I promise to make no dramatic presentations. Perhaps an exploration of the interaction between Church and State, Mission and Empire, might even enhance our understanding of both Crowther and the CMS.

There is yet another reason why I have selected this theme for our discussion. We have seen a succession of sudden changes in the Nigerian State. But for my earlier promise to avoid anything dramatic, I would have said a succession of dramatic changes. Sixteen months ago, we had a dictator who held everybody in thrall with false accusations, assassinations, detentions, and paid praise singers who said he was the only one who could govern Nigeria. We had five political parties, each one of which was reported to be begging him to accept its nomination to contest a democratic election, to supersede the one he helped to annul in 1993. Then, suddenly, he died; followed a month later by that of his prisoner, the President-elect. Then there followed the release of another prisoner who, in spite of all odds, has become the elected President. These events have shaken the nation down to its foundations, and people are asking fundamental questions about morality and power, religion and politics, Church and State. Many looked to religion for explanation, because purely rational explanations left too many questions unanswered. That is another way of saying that a historical analysis of these events cannot hope to be complete if it leaves religion, faith and belief out of

the equation. At any rate, no history of the Nigerian State can afford to leave the factor of Mission out.

We are trying to reconstruct the Nigerian state, and tackle the problem of power sharing among the various cultural and religious groups, which also raises the issue of Church and State in the context of a plural society. The Empire created the plural society; the Mission created the Church, and helped to shape the multi-religious context of the state, particularly the confrontation between Christians and Muslims. Exploring Mission and Empire should throw some light on the background of such issues. We shall touch briefly on the interaction between Church and State in England, how both were involved in the expansion of the Church overseas as the Mission, and the State was extended overseas as Empire. The Mission created a new Church, and the Empire a new State. Crowther, as a significant actor in both the Church and the State, will provide a focus and help to narrow this enormous subject down to manageable proportions.

In exploring the interaction of Church and State, Mission and Empire, we are of course telling old familiar stories. Our aim is to search for meaning, for new interpretations and understanding. It may be helpful, therefore, to attempt to state here my own perspective, that is, the framework of my analysis. Not being a theologian, I can only speak of my beliefs. One of the things I find most intriguing, and perhaps also exciting, about history is how rarely things turn out exactly as planned. Consider the plans, prayers, anxieties, expectations of those who planned the missions to Nigeria in the 1840s, and the hopes of the missionaries who tried to execute the plans. What vision of the future did they have for the people among whom they were working, and how does that vision compare with the reality today? In our discussion, we would try to compare the short-, the medium- and the long-term results, effects and implications of those initial plans. Consider also the death of the military dictator to whom I referred earlier, head of the military machine bequeathed to us by the Empire, a Muslim who exploited the political power of Islam. There are people here who may recall the expectations, fears and anxieties at the time as to how things would work out. Compare the actual happenings since then. It is difficult to resist the conclusion, however much we

may be surprised, disappointed or delighted at how things have turned out, that none of the happenings have taken God by surprise. He was there when the missionaries and organisers were planning. He knew their anxieties, and heard their prayers. He also knew what they did not know at the time, how it would all turn out. We now know how things are turning out, but we could never know the end of the story, although God knows already. That is why Evangelicals say that God is the Lord of time and of change, in the sense that He alone is not subject to time and change. He is the Lord of history in the sense that He alone knows the end from the very beginning. He is the author who writes the events before they even take place. Whether historians know it or not, and whether they believe it or not, in our search for historical truth, we are in effect searching to know what is already in the mind of God. That is why the whole truth will always elude us. But we have a duty and, for the believer, a moral duty to keep trying as hard as possible. We need then to remember that the Crowther story did not start with Wilmot Brooke and the Onitsha Finance Committee; and it did not end even with the death of the Bishop. Some issues need to be understood in a wider context and longer time perspective.

Evangelical Christianity and the State

Evangelical Christianity, as Andrew Walls has recently reminded us, "assumes Christendom, the territorial conception of the Christian faith that brought about the integration of throne and altar". That is to say, the Church 'assumed' the state, in the sense of knowing that it is there, and taking its existence for granted as part of the natural order of things. That was the basis of the evangelical sense of social responsibility, and concern for social reform. The Evangelical Revival was a protest movement against nominal Christianity in Christendom. Its aim was to achieve a truly Christian civil society. It extended and clarified the Reformation idea of a life of holy obedience, not only in the Church, but also in the secular world and in the family. It emphasised the need for individual response to the call for radical discipleship and personal decision, but still within the traditional framework of the Christian nation and the established Church. (Walls, 1996, 81-82) It thus appears that the issue of Church and State is more central to Evangelical thought than is often assumed. And, since Mission is an extension of the Church, and Empire is an extension of the State, the question we should ask is why the theme of Mission and Empire is not more often addressed.

It seems that there is still considerable embarrassment in discussing the interaction of Mission and Empire in polite society. Andrew Walls is suggesting that the issue of the rivalry between Church and State that historians assume passed away with the Medieval Age is still relevant today. Most historians are secular historians, by definition. We live in a secular age when Church and State are separated. Secular historians may recognise a religious or missionary factor, and the contribution of voluntary associations in education and social reform. But few secular historians have yet caught up to the need to explore, for example, the degree of interdependence and co-operation between Church and State, or the extent to which the fundamental structures of our state are based at least as much on religious as on economic ideas. These should sometimes point us in the direction of seeking religious, as we seek economic explanations.

Church historians are, if that were possible, perhaps even more embarrassed than secular historians in discussing the issue of Church and State. It is a fundamental belief that the Church and the Mission grow by the Providence of God. How, then, does the power of the State or Empire fit into the picture? You will recall that when Max Warren, as Hon. Secretary of the CMS, noticed that historians were avoiding the subject, he tackled it in the Reinecker Lectures that he gave at the Virginia Theological Seminary in 1955. To justify the close relationship between Mission and Empire in the colonial period, he tried to develop a Christian interpretation of British imperialism in Asia and Africa in terms of Divine Providence, and God as the Lord of history. His main conclusion was that if Christians will so often call for the use of state power then they must more often stand up to condemn the sin of the misuse of power. He entitled the published lectures as *Caesar - the Beloved Enemy*. M. M. Thomas, the Indian theologian responded that you cannot discuss the theology of imperialism without its demonology, just as you cannot discuss the theology of nationalism without its demonology. The main idea that emerged from the exchange has not been followed up; namely, that there is a point at which the theology of nationalism coincides with the theology of imperialism, the point at which the opposition of nationalism 'redeems' imperialism and enables it to achieve some good. Perhaps that point of convergence could be

explored and defined. Church historians may be interested in collaborating with secular historians on such a venture. That may be one way of reducing the embarrassment of the CMS in dealing with the legacy of Crowther.

I want to suggest in these lectures that, in British evangelical circles in the 19th century, three periods may be discerned in terms of attitude to the question of Mission and Empire: 1800 - 1840s; 1840s - 1870s; and after 1880. In the first period, in spite of the inherited theory of the separation of Church and State, the existence of the state, and its power to legislate in matters of social reform, including religious affairs, was taken for granted. Henry Martyn may be taken, perhaps not as typical, but as representative of this period. He wanted to be a missionary. He sought employment as Chaplain in the service of the East India Company that had hitherto held the view that "the sending of missionaries into our eastern possessions is the maddest, most extravagant and most unwarrantable project ... ever proposed by an enthusiastic lunatic". (Minute, cit. Cragg, 1992, 18) Martyn went to India in 1806, seven years before the Evangelicals succeeded in getting the Charter of the East India Company amended to legalise the entry of privately sponsored missionaries into its territories. Martyn, without the slightest touch of hypocrisy, felt no sense of contradiction in combining the roles of Chaplain and missionary. This was in spite of the occasional mathematical logic in his ruminations: "A man who has unjustly got possession of an estate hires me to preach to his servants and pays me a salary. The money wherewith he pays me comes unjustly to him, but justly to me. The Company are the acknowledged proprietors of the country and the ruling power" (*Journal*, cit. Cragg, 1992, 18). In other words, it was not for him to question the legitimacy of the Company as the recognised ruling Power. Some of the other chaplains objected to some of his doctrines in the same way that they could have if he had been a curate in Cornwall. He objected to nominal Christianity, whether in Europeans or Indians: "till our hearts are changed", he said, "we are abominable in the sight of God, and our own works, however useful to men, are worthless in his sight." (*Memoirs*, 234) When he first arrived in India, he remarked on the multitude of servants, "so great that one would suppose they thought themselves made for the service of the English". He soon got used to it, but

he never ceased complaining about injustice and oppression. "Alas, poor natives", he lamented on one occasion, "how accustomed they are to injustice. They cannot believe their English masters to be better than their Mahometan [lords]". (*Memoirs*, 175, 199) There was nothing imperious about him: his love reached out to all because, as he said, "the most despicable Soodar of India is of as much value in the sight of God as the King of Great Britain". Yet, even if he did not act the part, the Indians saw him as an official of the East India Company. Thus, when one of his assistants was unjustly imprisoned by a corrupt *cotwal* who was expecting a bribe, Martyn sent to his assistant not to be afraid, and to offer no bribes. The *cotwal* immediately released him. "I could hardly believe such barefaced oppression", Martyn commented. "How much has the Gospel done in producing sentiments of justice and equity in all ranks of people in Christendom". (*Memoirs*, 185, 238) What needs to be emphasised here is the inter-twining in his mind of the two ideas: the demand for real Christianity, without which everyone was despicable, and the social, cultural, and territorial concept of Christendom that included even the much maligned followers of popery. As Martyn put it in Persia in 1812: "Happy Europe! How has God favoured all the sons of Japheth, by persuading them to embrace the Gospel. How dignified are all the nations of Europe compared with this nation." (*Memoirs*, 406). Arising from the Pauline doctrine that 'authority is of God', Evangelicals recognised the authority of the state as of God, gave it their loyalty, and tried to use the power of the state for what they perceived as the will of God. This territorial concept of Christendom built Christianity into a social and cultural context. At home, it meant that the Evangelicals had to be concerned with more than spreading true religion. They also had to work for social reform, which necessitated campaigning to change state policy at many points. It meant also that the export of Christianity within Mission had to be accompanied by 'Civilisation' as its 'inseparable companion'. We will examine this period further in this lecture, and consider the implications of this concept of territorial Christendom for the history of Philanthropy in Sierra Leone.

In the second period, 1840s to 1870s, the relationship between Church and State was no longer taken for granted. It began to be examined more

critically. A majority of Evangelicals agreed that Christians must remain committed citizens anxious to see their Government adopt the right policies. They agreed that it was necessary for the Church to sometimes lean on the arm of the State, and the Church to respond to the state's call for service, provided the relationship continued to be questioned, defined and limited, and provided the Christian avoided the idolatry of relying on the arm of flesh instead of the power of the Gospel. This period may be called the Henry Venn years, when the Evangelicals tried to balance the corporate view of Christendom with the individual responsibility for radical discipleship. The economic theory of *laissez-faire* reinforced the inherited view of the separation of religion and politics without reducing the duty of the Christian to be loyal to his Queen. The nature and limitations of the establishment of the Church itself was being debated. We will examine the period further in the second Lecture, in the light of Crowther's work as an evangelist, a Translator of the Message and medium of trans-cultural exchange, with our focus on the Yoruba Mission. In the third period we will focus attention on the Niger Mission. The majority of Evangelicals in Britain, while maintaining the established Church in an attenuated form, believed that the close collaboration between religion and politics was not helping the growth of true Christianity. In theory, they tried to re-emphasise the policy of separation, and they questioned the authority of the Anglican denomination to speak for all Christians in Britain as the established Church. That was precisely when rapid developments in the Empire led to even greater collaboration between Mission and Empire. The relationship was not taken for granted but, since it was no longer mutual, the room for questioning became constrained: the Empire was dictating policy and leading the Mission to follow.

To indicate attitudes in this period, we could cite the words of R. N. Cust, a distinguished lawyer and linguist, former member of the Indian Civil Service where he rose to be Chief Judge of Bengal. He was a prominent member of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and a liberal member of the CMS Parent Committee for many years. In a paper that he sent to the 75th anniversary of the American Association of Missionary Societies in 1884, and which he repeated to undergraduates of this University on January 23, 1888 in the

Henry Martyn Hall - was that the original Henry Martyn Lecture? - R. N. Cust declared:

Gunboat Christianity is odious. Missionaries should be very chary of claiming the protection of their own Government. Saint Paul did not get much profit by appealing to Caesar ... Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's ... [But] Nothing can be more reprehensible, or wicked, than making Missions a handle for political enterprise.

He went on to say that French people, as followers of popery, openly avowed and persistently practised odious gunboat Christianity. They paid Roman Catholic missionaries to sign treaties and acquire territories, only to turn round to accuse the British and American Protestants of doing the same. The pretence that only other people were guilty of gunboat Christianity was part of the rhetoric of Empire. It was from this period, when practice differed so much from theory, that the discussion of Mission and Empire became embarrassing. We will return to this in the concluding Lecture.

Evangelical Christianity and State Policy

The colony of Sierra Leone did not grow out of any deliberate plan of the state. Rather, it was the outcome of the concern of a small group of people within the Church to end the evil of the slave trade which Christendom had tolerated for so long. It was a concern of the Evangelical revivalists to emphasise true Christian discipleship and extend brotherly love to the African. Initially, there were many Evangelicals who argued that the slave trade and slavery were economic and social, not religious and spiritual matters. As such they insisted on the traditional separation of religious and political affairs, and continued to oppose abolition. However, following the agitation of the Quakers, and John Wesley's own personal humanitarian feelings, the central core of the Evangelicals began to see in abolition both a call to duty, and the opportunity of a cause to rally the diverse opinions within the Evangelical family. To pursue the cause of abolition, therefore, they needed to rouse the consciousness of other believers to make abolition a matter of religious duty, and at the same time put pressure on political leaders and Parliament to accept abolition as a matter of state policy. Meanwhile, Parliament was stalling and calling for improvements in the condition of the slaves. It became necessary to care for the freed slaves, especially those freed as a result of Lord Mansfield's judgement of 1772. To cater for them better than was possible in Britain, it was decided to resettle them in West Africa. In 1786, some 400 of them, including 60 white prostitutes, were taken to Sierra Leone, with the help of the Government, but with minimal arrangements for their administration and defence. The attempt failed disastrously. Without proper shelter, they were exposed in the rainy season; the neighbouring peoples, including slave traders, were unfriendly and looted their stores. In 1791, the Sierra Leone Company was floated to provide transport and encourage settlers to engage in agriculture, and market their produce, so as to demonstrate the superiority of agriculture over the slave trade. That is to say that it was recognised that Philanthropy alone was not enough. It had to be accompanied by commerce, though the Company remained more philanthropic than truly commercial, and continued to be subsidised. The SLC was

able to make better arrangements to transport African loyalists who served on the British side of the American War of Independence, and some Maroons from Jamaica, who had been settled temporarily in Nova Scotia. The Company provided a Constitution, a Governor and a Chaplain. It found an effective governor in Zachary Macaulay, but arrangements for defence proved inadequate when, during the Napoleonic Wars, the French attacked what they saw as a British colony. Inevitably, the state became involved. Philanthropy, on the scale that was required, had to involve the state and be managed as a public project.

In their campaign for social reform, the Evangelicals had been pioneering strategies to influence public policy. Reforms of Parliament itself were calculated to broaden the suffrage and make Parliament more susceptible to public pressure, not only by the nobility and the bishops, but also by the increasing numbers of successful commercial and industrial entrepreneurs. Those techniques were still to be developed and perfected for the more intense struggle to end slavery, and secure emancipation for the slaves. In the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, William Wilberforce was able to secure the support of the leaders of the main parties in Parliament, - William Pitt, Charles Fox, and Edmund Burke. The Act was passed in 1807, eighteen years after Wilberforce first moved it in the House. Christendom responded to the prodding of a few Christians, but that did not imply that the majority of people in Christendom were Christians, or had become persuaded that the slave trade was evil. Similarly, when another thirty years of intense propaganda and lobbying saw the Emancipation Act through Parliament, it did not mean that majority of British people were ready to embrace the slave, or former slave, as a brother. There had to be compromises. It has even been said that the slaves were not emancipated: they were ransomed for the 23 million pounds paid to their owners, while the slaves themselves received no compensation to help them face their new situation. In the necessary follow-up activities to the Abolition Act, - to prevent other states reaping advantage from the British withdrawal from the trade, - Mission and Empire had to come closer and work together. The Act abolishing the slave trade provided for the stationing of a squadron of the Royal Navy in West Africa, based on Freetown harbour, to enforce the prohibition on British traders, and monitor ships of other countries that agreed by various treaties to give up the trade. An Admiralty Court was also to be stationed there to try captured vessels, adjudicate, and set free captured slaves. It was to ensure that Freetown was

able to play these roles that it was declared officially a British crown colony with effect from January 1808. We shall see the extent to which that colony and the naval squadron became powerful instruments for extending the Empire, and the Mission too.

Few question that Freetown was a joint project of Mission and Empire. The Nova Scotians, mostly independent Methodists imbued with the 'American Republican Spirit', had initially asserted their right to freedom of worship on the basis of the separation of Church and State. "We cannot persuade ourselves that politics and religion have any connexion, and therefore think it not for a Governor of the one to be meddling with the other", they argued in 1796. (Hastings, 1996, 181) But their freedom of worship was not threatened, and that was not the real issue. The issue was the unquestioning acceptance of co-operation between Church and State as a feature of Christendom, especially in a foreign land. In order to maintain their identity, and avoid asking for favours from the Governor and his Chaplain of the established Church, the leaders of the Nova Scotian Methodists appealed to the English Methodist Conference for assistance. Among the succession of Methodist ministers sent, William Davies did not hesitate to ask the Governor for assistance in running schools. When the Nova Scotians repudiated him, he became a government salaried official, saying, "I am a loyal subject to my king and wish to do the little I can for the support of that Government, especially in a foreign part." (Walls, 1970, 126) That was by no means an isolated case. The story is told of one Revd. Ireland, an Anglican Chaplain of the garrison at Grahamstown, who was allowed to use the Methodist school to hold services. When he took to ringing bells before his services, and the Methodist minister copied the practice, he secured an order of the colonial government to prohibit the Methodists on the grounds that only the established Church was entitled to advertise its worship in that way. Yet, - and this is the point - the Methodist minister continued to cooperate with the Chaplain in using the Methodist school for holding Anglican services.

At the beginning of 1808, when Sierra Leone became a crown colony, there were only about 2,000 settlers there. By 1814, the number had risen to 10,000, and was rising by about 3,000 annually from emancipated captured

slaves, called recaptives, from different ethnic groups, mostly from West Africa. Rehabilitating them, and building them into a community of Creoles became the main task of the colony, and it was a task providing opportunities and responsibilities for both Mission and Empire. For instance, the recaptives included representatives of so many ethnic groups in West Africa that it encouraged the comparative study of African languages. English became the lingua franca of the colony, from where interpreters could be recruited. But the initial task of building up the diverse peoples into a community was not easy. Because of the high rate of mortality among the officials, there were frequent changes of policy. Sir Charles MacCarthy, from an Irish and Catholic background, survived as Governor for ten years, 1814-24, and his policies were crucial in the evolution of that community. He persuaded the Mission to abandon the desire to rush to the hinterland to reach the Muslim jihad states in the Futa Jallon area, and the attempt to convert the nominally Muslim Susu outside the colony. MacCarthy urged the missionaries to concentrate their attention on the recaptives within the colony. The politics of the location of missionary effort should be noted, since it had important consequences for the future of the respective countries. Many missionaries were anxious to go and do battle in Muslim states. But they also often looked over their shoulders to see where they could expect co-operation from traders and protection from state power. The acknowledged lure of the Islamic states indicated a preference for centres of power and commercial importance.

MacCarthy's plan was to settle the recaptives in villages at the foothills around Freetown, each village being designated a parish, under a missionary as pastor, magistrate and superintendent. This was on the principle that many vicars in Britain were also appointed Justices of the Peace. In the Freetown situation, the Governor argued, "it is nearly impossible for a clergyman residing in the mountains with captured Negroes to do much good unless to that character he unites that of Magistrate and Superintendent. By the authority of the two latter offices, he can keep the uncivilized in due order and reward the industry of the well behaved". Was that the voice of the Empire, or of the Mission? Perhaps we should just say that it was the combined voice of the Empire and the Mission. The CMS sent the Hon. Secretary, Edward

Bickersteth, to visit Freetown in 1816, and negotiate a formal agreement to implement this co-operation between Mission and Empire. The missionaries, designated Superintendents, became salaried officials of the colony and wielded powers both as Chaplain and Magistrate. The formal agreement did not last effectively beyond 1822, because of lack of qualified personnel and shortage of funds, but the spirit of close co-operation continued in practice. European missionaries in Sierra Leone were always close to the colonial authorities, and always wielded magisterial, or virtually magisterial, powers over their parishioners. The missionaries endeavoured to promote, not only the true religion, but also civilisation, the culture of Christendom.

Crowther in Freetown

Crowther arrived in Freetown in July 1822 and enjoyed the benefits which both Mission and Empire provided. He had been enslaved as a teenager of about 15 years, early in 1821. He was passed from one owner to another, and his status changed from a war captive to a domestic slave, till he entered the export market and ended up at a collection camp near Lagos. After about two months at the camp, he was loaded on April 7 on board a Brazilian brig, which was captured by a ship of the Royal Navy that same evening off the coast of Lagos. The ship took three months on the coast, capturing other vessels as it patrolled towards the Niger Delta before returning to Freetown where, after a few weeks, the Admiralty court condemned the Brazilian brig and freed the captives.

Crowther was assigned to live with a missionary in Leopold village. He learnt quickly. Within 6 months, he was able to read the New Testament, and he was appointed a monitor with an allowance of six pence a month, to assist other recaptives to read and write. He was not baptised until December 1825, perhaps to ensure that his conversion was genuine and did not arise only from gratitude or expectations of material benefits. In 1826, his missionary guardian, Thomas Davey, took him to Britain where he attended the Parish school in Islington for a few months. Davey had hoped that the CMS Parent Committee would allow Crowther to stay on in London and get an English education, but the CMS experience suggested that it was better to improve the facilities and train such bright students locally. The elementary and industrial training school at Regent was consequently moved to Freetown and relocated on top of the hill overlooking Fourah Bay. There, the German

missionaries, especially Haensel, tried to create something like the kind of training they had received at the Basel Seminary. Crowther became a foundation student there in 1827.

Thereafter, he rose very rapidly, alternating between Mission and Empire patronage. He left Fourah Bay in 1829, and was posted to teach in the Government school at Regent. He returned to Fourah Bay as tutor in 1834. He got married to another Yoruba (Oyo) recaptive, who was also a teacher in a Government school. He was coming to prominence as a leader of the Yoruba recaptives, learning the Evangelical art of petitioning and lobbying Government. He continued to improve himself academically by private study, and understudying missionary practice of evangelisation among Muslim and pagan recaptives in the colony, and the neighbouring Temne. By 1837, he was prominent enough to have been asked by the CMS to write an account of his early life, enslavement and rescue for the CMS *Intelligencer* as a testimony to the goodness and the Providence of God. It is not surprising therefore that, when the Government was fitting out the Niger Expedition and recruiting staff, he was approached to act as chaplain to the group of recaptive farmers to be settled at the proposed Model Farm on the Niger. Crowther, always a family man, declined because his wife was expecting a baby and he could not leave her behind to go and settle on the Niger. But he agreed to go as the Assistant to the CMS official representative on the Expedition.

It should be observed that, while trying to take advantage of whatever facilities that the missionaries and the Government could provide, the recaptives were also willing to take the initiative in helping themselves. They joined in rehabilitating newly arrived recaptives from their home areas, and thus kept in touch with the latest information. They protested at the inadequacy of facilities and opportunities. They objected to the conscription of recaptives into the army, or recruitment as indentured labour for the West Indies, which was one way that Government adopted to ease the problem of inadequate facilities in Freetown. They organised various self-help schemes through ethnic unions and religious fellowships, some of which were under the aegis of missionaries, when not related to Islam or traditional worship. They raised

capital by the old *esusu* saving clubs in which, on a regular weekly or monthly basis, each member contributed an agreed sum, which the members collected in bulk in rotation. Through such means, some raised enough capital to join together to buy condemned vessels, and began to venture into trading in neighbouring waters, down the coast.

Two aspects of the *Remedy* as a development plan need to be emphasised here. The first was that, in spite of the effort of MacCarthy in Sierra Leone, Buxton maintained that Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation were to be offered first to peoples in the interior. The argument was that the coastal peoples were already deprived because of their involvement in the slave trade, and that in any case it was from the interior that most of the slaves came, making them priority victims of the slave trade. The more fundamental reason was probably because it was assumed that Islamic influences in the interior had already spread belief in one God and therefore created a more congenial atmosphere for evangelisation. Buxton sold this idea of preference for interior people to the Government and it remained part of the official mind in Nigeria for a very long time. The second was the dimension of civilisation proposed in the Prospectus of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa, attached to the 1840 version of *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*. After declaring that 'the only complete cure of all the evils' that the slave trade had caused in Africa was 'the introduction of Christianity into Africa', it defined the programme of civilisation as follows:

[to] adopt effectual measures for reducing the practical languages of Western and central Africa into writing; prevent or mitigate the prevalence of disease and suffering among the people of Africa; encourage practical science in all its various branches; investigate the system of drainage best calculated to succeed in a climate so humid and so hot; assist in promoting the formation of roads and canals, the manufacture of paper and the use of the printing press; afford essential assistance to the natives by furnishing them with useful information as to the best mode of cultivation, as to the productions which command a steady market and by introducing the most approved agricultural implements and seeds. The time may come when the knowledge of the mighty powers of steam may contribute rapidly to promote the improvement and prosperity of that country.

That was the voice of the Empire, self-confident and assured; arrogant perhaps in its readiness to assume responsibility for the care of the less fortunate. But that too was an essential ingredient in the psychology of the missionary.

The immediate plan was to send a massive expedition up the Niger at a cost of 100,000 pounds sterling, now worth more like 10,000,000. The Expedition was not only to make a survey for the introduction of Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation, but also to impress Africans with the knowledge and power of British Industrial Revolution. On the three steamers, there were about 150 Europeans, and slightly more African auxiliaries, interpreters, stokers and other labourers. Even today, a trade delegation of that size would be deemed impressive. Among the Europeans, there were the naval officers and sailors, and four government commissioners with authority to make treaties of friendship and commitment to abolition, acquire land at the confluence for a Model Farm, and explore the feasibility of stationing a consul on the Niger. There were scientists equipped with the latest instruments to make observations about the climate, the plants, animals, soils, weather, mineral resources, and the people themselves, and their social and political institutions. There were commercial agents to report about the trade, the currency, and traffic on the river. There were agriculturists to set up the Model Farm, and settle 24 Sierra Leonean farmers there under a Superintendent and a Chaplain. Besides the official Chaplain who was in the Captain's ship, the CMS nominated J. F. Schon, a German missionary who had embarked on the study of Hausa and Igbo, and Crowther who had been studying Hausa with him, to act as chaplain in each of the other two ships. They were to carry out a feasibility study for the introduction of Christianity. There was also John Langley, an Igbo who had been a school teacher, turned trader in gunpowder, and was one of the few Africans appointed Superintendent, in his case of Charlotte village. He was dismissed and became a cantankerous critic of Government and Mission. During an illness, he was converted by Nova Scotian Baptists, and he became a fervent and pious Evangelical. He volunteered to join the Expedition as a missionary and, when he was turned down, he joined the Model Farm as an unofficial chaplain.

The Expedition signed treaties with the Obi of Aboh, and they negotiated with the Attah of Igalla for land at the confluence of the Niger and the Benue. They

acquired the land, set out the Model Farm, and settled the farmers. Within a month, it was decided to send two of the steamers back to Fernando Po on the coast with the dead and dying. The smallest ship, with both Schon and Crowther on board, proceeded up to Egga and made contacts with the Fulani rulers of Nupe before turning back. The high rate of mortality had crippled the Expedition, and it was decided to abort it altogether. The Model Farm was wound up; the farmers were left alone, but when a visiting crew discovered in 1842 that some of them had scattered, and some were involved in the slave trade, they too were disbanded. Within two months on the river, 49 of the 150 Europeans were dead, and several more were incapacitated with malaria. In the two months, a lot of useful information had been gathered, and the exercise in Philanthropy, sponsored jointly by the Evangelicals and the state, had become the beginning of the British empire in Nigeria.

It was the first major assignment that brought Crowther to the limelight. His journal was published with that of Schon, and it was clear how valuable his inclusion on the Expedition had been. He more than complemented Schon. He had his own manner of approaching people, and his own understanding of the politics of the Expedition. Especially at Egga in the Nupe country, he was able to meet people from Ilorin, and thus relate his experience on the Niger with his knowledge of the Yoruba country. It was generally agreed that his journal made a valuable contribution to the totality of knowledge and insights into the state of affairs in the lower Niger basin, on which future developments were to be based. His account of his early life, enslavement and rescue was attached to the published journal as positive evidence of the potential results that could be expected from the anti-slavery Expedition. In the conclusion to his journal, he stressed that the most important lesson to be drawn from the fate of the Expedition was the need to raise up a 'Native Agency'. Adequate provision for training natives of West Africa in all the 'civilized arts' could have reduced the need to rely on such a large force of Europeans in the unhealthy climate of West Africa. The force of that argument was not lost on the CMS Parent Committee. Indeed, this new emphasis on Native Agency was implicit in Buxton's ideas, and shared also by Schon. It had hitherto been talked about

without much follow up action, but it became a major factor distinguishing the period 1840s - 1870s from the earlier period.

Crowther as Native Agent

Crowther was asked to proceed to Britain in 1842, to study for a year at the CMS Training Institute at Islington. He was ordained in 1843, as deacon in June, and priest in October. It should be stressed that no special concessions were made for Crowther's background. The Bishop of London who examined him, found him adequate intellectually. His Evangelical faith was robust. His published life story and journal of the Niger Expedition show that he had mastered the language of the age which, it may be noted, emphasised faith in the Almighty and trust in the redeeming love of Jesus, more than the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Regius Professor of Greek in Oxford, who was his examiner in Greek said he would like to go and show his papers to colleagues in Oxford who had been arguing about the capacity of Africans for logical thought. The Native Agents that Crowther was suggesting were to be equal partners, not subordinate subalterns to the Europeans. The first implication of this was that the training available in Freetown was to be upgraded. A grammar school for boys was to be started, followed soon by one for girls, and the standard at Fourah Bay College was to be raised to take account of the higher abilities of candidates coming from the grammar school.

By the time Crowther returned to Freetown, there had been a significant development. The publicity that preceded the Niger Expedition had raised high expectations among the recaptives in Sierra Leone and the emancipated slaves in the West Indies. The failure of the Expedition could not be allowed to hold up efforts to realise at least part of the expectations. Some of the Yoruba recaptives trading down the West African coast had reached Badagri, and stimulated a desire to migrate back to the Yoruba country. They had appealed to both the Methodists and the CMS to extend their missionary activities down the coast. The missionaries tried to discourage them, in the fear that they would become prey a second time to the slave traders. The recaptives argued that it was safe, but it would of course become safer if the missionaries followed them, because that would ensure protection from the anti-slavery squadron of the Royal Navy. They offered free passage to a missionary to go and see things for himself. That was how Henry Townsend, a young schoolteacher in Freetown who volunteered for the Niger Expedition and was turned down in favour of Crowther, was sent to Badagri. On arrival, he found that Thomas Birch Freeman had beaten him to it. Freeman had been to

Abeokuta, the newly founded Egba capital which offered so much promise for accepting the message of Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation that it was nicknamed 'Sunrise within the Tropics'. Townsend paid his own visit to Abeokuta and returned to Freetown with the good news. The CMS accepted the news not as an opportunity for the evangelisation of the Yoruba as such, but as an alternative route to the interior of the Niger. The objectives remained the same: to combat the slave trade at the source with Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation as detailed by Buxton. The priorities remained the same, to reach the Muslim populations on the Niger. While the State and the Empire were trying to recover from the political embarrassment that followed the disastrous failure of the Niger Expedition, the Mission was accepting responsibility to carry the programme forward.

This new development brought a fresh Mandate to Crowther with the prospect of becoming a missionary to his own people. He intensified his study of the Yoruba language, translating parts of the Prayer Book, and beginning to hold service and preach in Yoruba. But already his Mandate was becoming complicated with ambiguities. As a Native Agent, all Africans were his 'people', those on the Niger no less than the Yoruba. Even among the Yoruba, as he knew but unknown to CMS House, there were sub-groupings with conflicting interests. There was yet another complication. Crowther had a copy of the *African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* with him on the Niger Expedition. He accepted the programme outlined and he remained committed to it. He genuinely believed that Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation were inseparable companions if there was really to be a genuine effort at regeneration, a serious attempt to repair the ravages of the slave trade and move development forward. As a project of the Mission and Empire, the Empire was to look after Commerce and Civilisation while the Mission looked after Christianity, each co-operating with the other, but observing broadly the separation of religion from political affairs. When the Mission accepted in the meantime to shoulder the whole programme, how was separation to be maintained? The CMS Secretaries realised that. In their Instructions of October 1844, they referred to three powerful means able to improve the condition of man, namely, - Preach the Gospel "with faithfulness, affection,

zeal, and diligence to lay the foundation of the improvement of the social condition on solid grounds"; Agriculture "to supply the necessities of life, foster habits of industry, fixed habitation, and thus operate as a preventive of wars and rapine"; and Commerce especially for marketing the produce of agriculture. They added that "Missionaries must not engage themselves in commerce, or in agriculture except to a limited extent. On no account have anything to do with firearms, [gun]powder or ardent spirits" (CA2 L1, f3). There were yet other ambiguities. Three people were earmarked for the proposed Yoruba Mission - Gollmer, Townsend, and Crowther. There was to be no one designated leader, as each ordained missionary had an independent responsibility. Crowther was the oldest in age, almost 40; Gollmer was senior by date of ordination. Townsend, aged 23, was designated Secretary and was to be the channel of communication between the Mission as a whole and the Committee in London. He was the pioneer who had visited Badagri and Abeokuta. Besides, Crowther was to be pre-occupied with his linguistic studies while holding himself in readiness 'for joining the endeavour of Mr Jamieson etc of Liverpool to penetrate inland'. Probably the greatest ambiguity concerns the status of a recaptive becoming a Native Agent, with the legacy of European missionaries as pastors and magistrates to the captives. The missionaries were to take two houses. The one made in Sierra Leone was for Gollmer; the other, made in England on an experimental basis to see if it could be cheaper than the one made locally, was for Townsend. "Being himself a Native", the memorandum went on:

we incline to think it will on many grounds be desirable that [Mr Crowther] should occupy a respectable native house. Regards to health will not, we presume, in his case require any other provision. ... the Native Teacher, even though ordained, should not be too highly raised above his countrymen in his habits and mode of living. ... The salary of a Native Teacher should also be carefully kept from being too high, not only from the injurious effect which a high salary might have upon himself, but also from the obstacle which it would interpose to the due increase of a Native Agency which is, under God, essential to the wide diffusion of the Gospel in Africa.

Summary

Let us try to summarise the argument in this first part of our discussion. At the beginning of the 19th century, in spite of the legacy of the separation of Church and State, Evangelicals assumed 'Christendom', and were willing to co-operate loyally with the State. They emphasised the separation of religion from politics, but their commitment to social reform meant that they had to exert pressure to get necessary changes in State policy. In fact, co-operation between Church and State was not questioned. The point at issue was whether the Evangelicals could get the Government to spend money on causes that interested them. There were party differences on that point, with Tories more willing to consider Government action, while the Whigs tended towards laissez-faire and preferred the operation of market forces. Evangelicals were initially not strong within the established Church, but they were willing to work to see their numbers and influence grow. The core of Evangelicals within the established Church, touched by humanitarian feeling for the plight of slaves, decided to embrace abolition. They used this as a cause to rally all Evangelicals, and to endeavour to rouse the consciousness of all Christians to true Christianity, radical discipleship, personal holiness, and greater commitment to show love and good neighbourliness in the scriptural sense. By emphasising that they were keeping out of politics except on issues which they regarded as moral and above partisan politics, they managed to retain allies in all parties on the issues of abolition and social reform.

The alliance of Evangelical Christians and the abolitionist movement led to the foundation of Sierra Leone as a private venture, with some Government support. Through the activities of William Wilberforce in Parliament, the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was passed and Government required the use of Freetown as a base from which to enforce the Act. Philanthropy on the scale envisaged necessitated changing the status of Sierra Leone from a private to a public venture. Sierra Leone became a crown colony, an outpost of Empire. The campaign against the slave trade also helped to raise consciousness for missionary expansion. The alliance went on to tackle emancipation, with Buxton having replaced Wilberforce as the parliamentary leader of the movement. The alliance succeeded in getting the Act passed, but only after making compromises with the West Indian interest, such that the slaves were not emancipated but ransomed from their masters at a cost of 23 million pounds, and with no compensation for the slaves. Mission and Empire had to work together to cater for the recaptives in Sierra Leone, and blend them into a community of Creoles. Freetown became a centre for the study of African languages, the education and recruitment of interpreters and other assistants for the expansion both of Mission and of Empire.

It was the alliance of Evangelicals and the abolitionist movement that led to the publication of *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*. This expanded

the agenda of the abolitionist movement to a comprehensive package of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization in the sense of both agricultural and industrial development. By pushing the project at a non-partisan level, the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa got the Government committed to the gigantic Niger Expedition of 1841. The aim was to reach the Sokoto Caliphate and embark on a programme of agricultural and industrial development, beginning with a Model Farm at the Niger-Benue confluence. The failure of the Expedition, and temporary embarrassment of Government, left the Mission with the responsibility of embarking on the project on their own. When Yoruba captives pointed the way into the Yoruba country, the Mission accepted it only as an alternative route to the upper Niger, the Sokoto Caliphate.

Crowther came to the limelight as a member of the Niger Expedition, and the publication of his very impressive journal. He was called to Britain for further training and ordination as leader of Native Agents who needed to be encouraged to take a prominent place in the evangelisation and development of Africa. This began to spell out a Mandate for Crowther, but it was a Mandate full of ambiguities. As a Native Agent, all Africans were his 'people'. As he could not immediately get into Hausaland, he was to drop the study of Hausa and take up Yoruba. He was to accompany Townsend and Gollmer to embark on the Yoruba Mission, where he was to be the language expert, but he was to keep himself in readiness for Liverpool merchants anxious to continue the Niger Expedition project as a private venture. He was to be a colleague to the missionaries, but a Native Agent when it came to facilities. Many questions arise, some of which we will explore in the other lectures, many of which we have to leave here. For example, what is the relationship between Philanthropy and imperial control? A recent work on Fiji, entitled *Imperial Benevolence*, asks for a history of humanitarianism, saying that 'the relationships between benevolent intentions, armed force and national prestige remain as precarious today as they were over a century ago'; and adding that 'one person's humanitarian intervention is another's neo-colonialism'. (Jane Samson, 1998, 175) Perhaps there is a danger that we may have become too complacent about the achievements of Mission and

Empire in Sierra Leone in the 19th century. We therefore also need to keep in view the longer-term perspective. Why, for example, did Freetown in the colonial period become a predominantly Muslim city? And did Philanthropy in Sierra Leone in the period 1800-1840s, in its attitudes and approaches, in the making of Creolehood, in any way contribute to the recent turmoil in that country?

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