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

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- Lecture II: Crowther and Language in the Yoruba
Mission

Henry Martyn Lecture II: Crowther and Language in the Yoruba Mission

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Introduction

Our focus in this lecture is to explore the relationship between Mission and Empire in the Henry Venn years, against the background of the ambiguity of Crowther's position as an African and a Yoruba in the Mission. Language relates to specific cultures. We are already aware that in translating the universal message of the Gospel into a specific language, we cannot avoid contextualising the message into that culture. Ambiguity comes in when we learn other languages and we relate to the different cultures involved in the languages at different levels. Crowther spoke Yoruba, but studied English before he had a chance to study Yoruba. In translating the Bible into Yoruba, he was translating the New Testament from the original Greek and, no doubt, understanding the Greek by comparing it with the King James Version in English. He began his study of Hebrew rather late. He therefore translated the Old Testament more from the English, and relied on the assistance of others like Hinderer with more competence in Hebrew. The Translator is a symbolic character central to the whole process of communication involved in conveying the message of the Gospel across the frontiers of language and culture. That was why, for Venn, the Native Agent as translator and medium of cultural exchange was a crucial figure. The most essential function of the Mission was to build up such Native Agents. Since the message of the Gospel implies parity between one language version of the Bible and another, there should also be parity between the missionary and the Native Agent as translator and medium of cultural exchange.

As a Native Agent, Crowther was an African, and all Africans were his people. That was why he was asked to take up Hausa when embarking on his journey to the Niger in 1841. On the Niger Mission, he later on had to acquire some Igbo, Ijo, and Nupe. His identification as an African had some significance because, even now, the Pan-African identity, in opposition to the European or the Western, remains relevant as the fountain of the individual nationalisms, whether Yoruba or Nigerian. There is the added complication that when

Crowther started translating the Bible into Yoruba, the Yoruba people did not exist as a cultural unit. There were several sub-groups and dialects - Oyo, Egba, Egbado, Ijebu, Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti, Owo, Ondo, and others. Crowther was Oyo. The different groups spoke a mutually intelligible language, and most of the ruling dynasties claimed origin from a single source at Ife. It was in the process of translating the Bible into Crowther's Oyo dialect, which he and his colleagues adapted and standardized into a written form of the language, that Yoruba nationalism or ethnicity was born.

Apart from the symbolic character of the Translator as the medium of cultural exchange, let us not underrate the physical and intellectual contribution involved in his work. For the translator, the work transcended every aspect of life and culture. Crowther said that some people might see only the spiritual benefits of the translator studying the Bible with intensity so as to understand its inner meaning. But he said there was also the danger that during worship and devotion, the thought of the translator might be wandering to how the word or phrase should be rendered instead of concentrating on the message. To further appreciate the conditions under which Crowther, as translator, had to work, let us take his lament in a letter he wrote to Venn in December 1862. He had just returned to Lagos from his annual visitation to the Niger, and he went to pay a courtesy call on the Governor when his house got burnt down. If he had been in or nearby, his first thought would have been how to rescue his manuscripts "but on this occasion, I was not at home to put my resolution to practice ...

Thus the manuscript of nearly all the remaining books of the Pentateuch which I would have prepared for the press this quarter were destroyed. My collections of words and proverbs in Yoruba, of eleven years' constant observations since the publication of the last edition of my Yoruba vocabulary, were also completely destroyed. ... it cannot be recovered with money nor can I easily recall to memory all the collections I had made during my travels at Rabba and through the Yoruba country, in which places I kept my ears open to every word to catch what I had not then secured...Now all are gone like a dream (cit. Ajayi, 1965, 128).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, it appears that the Yoruba kingdoms and principalities managed to organize themselves to avoid the worst effects of

the slave trade. The days of Iife hegemony were long past. It was the Oyo cavalry force that protected most of the areas to the north and west of Yorubaland. The Oyo Empire controlled Nupe and Borgu, and expanded down to the coast, incorporating the Egba and Egbado, and beyond into Dahomey and Togo. Porto Novo (Ajase) was the major outlet for Oyo participation in the slave trade. At the end of the 18th century, the cumulative effects of the slave trade began to show. The Egba revolted; Nupe, Borgu and, later, Dahomey became independent. Internal structural weaknesses began to manifest. When the Fulani jihadists added their own pressure, the centre of the empire collapsed. The capital that Clapperton visited in 1826, and the whole metropolitan province was destroyed. Oyo refugees migrated southwards, seeking new lands to occupy, thus setting in motion a domino effect. They pushed the Egba out of most of their territory, and established new capitals, - Oyo, Ijaye, and Ibadan. The Egba migrants established a new capital called Abeokuta [Under cover of the Rocks], at a defensible site with outcrops of granite. They invaded Ijebu and Egbado territories, seeking an outlet to the sea. It was because of this state of conflict, and the search for security, reconstruction and new beginnings that both Freeman of the Methodist Mission in Cape Coast, and Henry Townsend from Freetown, were welcomed so warmly by the Egba leader in 1842. When the main CMS party arrived in January 1845, the situation at Abeokuta was so unsettled that they had to remain at Badagry until August 1846 before they could proceed. The series of wars continued until the British were able to impose their rule over the whole region in 1893. It was because of these wars that the Yoruba were so prominent among the recaptives in Sierra Leone, and among slaves arriving in Brazil and Cuba in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Abeokutan Policy

The missionaries had to evolve their own peace plan. CMS headquarters came later to understand the complexity of the situation. For the moment, they relied on the missionaries on the spot. Townsend was quick to see the ambiguity of Crowther's position as an Oyo man in an Egba town. He probably already knew the difference between the Oyo and the Egba. He might have exaggerated the differences, forgetting the considerable amount of mixing that resulted from the series of migrations. He

probably oversimplified the complicated relationships that prevailed at the personal level in spite of the inter-group wars. Crowther was to discover his mother among those gathered to hear him preach in Abeokuta, along with his sister and her family. A step-brother of his, and an uncle were later discovered in bondage and rescued. Nevertheless, Townsend decided to take charge of the political relationship with the Egba authorities. He placed his mission station at Ake, the political centre, while Crowther planted his own near the southern gate of the town at Igbein. Gollmer remained in Badagri to keep in touch with the ships and traders, and thus look after the supplies of the Mission.

It was Townsend who designed the 'Abeokutan policy', went to Britain on leave in 1848, and sold it to Henry Venn who worked hard to persuade the Government to accept it. The plan was to get the British naval squadron involved in the search for peace in the Yoruba country, exclusively from the point of view of the Egba chiefs who related well with Townsend. The Mission was to call on the resources of Empire to extend the anti-slavery Treaty system to Abeokuta, making it virtually a Protectorate, if not a colony. The naval squadron was to strengthen the defences of the town, and defend it against its slave trading enemies in Dahomey and Lagos. The hostile ruler of Lagos was to be removed and his pro-Egba uncle restored to the throne so that Lagos could develop as Abeokuta's 'natural port' and outlet to the sea. Even within Abeokuta, there were differences in the points of view, between military and civil chiefs, between those who welcomed the offer of alliance with the British and the missionaries, and those who would rather cultivate traditional allies that they knew how to deal with. Townsend took a letter from the Egba civil chiefs, saying how much they welcomed the package of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization, and offering to reciprocate friendship with the British. Venn had to struggle with the Hutt Committee of the House of Commons, which concluded that the number of slavers and captives reaching Freetown, compared with the numbers of slaves still being exported, did not justify the expenditure in men and material. The Committee therefore recommended, with the chairman's casting vote, that the squadron should be withdrawn and other more effective options sought for combating the slave trade. Venn's powerful allies got a Committee of the House of Lords to interview the same missionaries and traders that the Hutt Committee had seen. The Committee concluded that what was needed was to increase the strength of the naval force, intensify the signing of treaties with states willing

to give up the trade, and increase the pressure on those refusing to. It was not too difficult to get the House of Lords to endorse those conclusions. However, it was a major victory for the anti-slavery movement when the House of Commons rejected the conclusions of its own Committee and accepted those of the House of Lords.

Yet, the lords of the Admiralty remained very hesitant about the Prime Minister's decision to intervene in the succession dispute in Lagos. There was no legal justification for invading Lagos since there were no British citizens or property endangered there. There was not even the excuse of a treaty contravened since none had been signed. It was to persuade the lords of the Admiralty to act that Venn invoked Crowther as his trump card. He heard that Crowther was on leave in Freetown and summoned him to London. He got Lord Wriothsesley Russell to take him to the palace to meet the Queen and Prince Albert, after he had discussed with Lord Palmerston. He visited this University, among other places, giving talks about his life, his work and the potential for the Gospel in the Yoruba country.

As a result of all this, Capt. John Beecroft, the English governor of the Spanish Island of Fernando Po, was appointed a Consul to oversee British interests in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. He went to visit the king of Dahomey who still refused to sign an anti-slave trade treaty. He then went to Badagri to see Akintoye, the king of Lagos who was deposed by Kosoko, his nephew. Kosoko who reigned in Lagos was an ally of Dahomey, and he too refused to sign a treaty. Akintoye in exile in Badagri was an ally of the Egba, and a friend of the missionaries. Beecroft found Akintoye more than willing to sign a treaty with the British. The Consul went on to visit the missionaries in Abeokuta, where he stayed as a guest of the Mission for twelve days. On his return to Badagri, he took Akintoye with him to Fernando Po, in a kind of protective custody. The stage was set for war. The attack of Dahomey on Abeokuta in March 1851 helped to mobilize the Evangelicals, and Lord Palmerston accepted it as the *casus belli* the Admiralty were looking for. Lord Palmerston issued instructions for the naval squadron to blockade Lagos and Dahomey, and take measures for the defence of Abeokuta. Commander Forbes obtained ammunition worth 300 pounds from the depot in Freetown:

- two light field pieces (3-pounders), with three hundred rounds of powder and shot; 159 muskets flint-lock, with bayonets; twenty-eight thousand musket-ball cartridges and two barrels of flints.

Gollmer received these and had them transported to Abeokuta. Forbes went to Badagri, harangued the recaptives there to rise to the defence of Christianity and Civilisation: to show "the advantage of the knowledge the white men have, through God's assistance, ingrafted in you". He recruited 30 of them to be trained to use the arms sent to Abeokuta, and improve on the defences of the town.

Yet, Commodore Bruce, commanding the squadron in West Africa, himself an Evangelical Christian, remained cautious. He knew that Kosoko's Lagos was not going to be a push over. He later confirmed that, even if Kosoko had a Woolwich trained engineer, he could not have done better. But that was not why he was hesitant. He went to Fernando Po and interviewed Akintoye. He informed the Admiralty that he did not think that Akintoye could hold Lagos, if reinstated. His advice was that Lagos had a potential that went beyond being just an outlet for Abeokuta. If the Government must intervene, they should think of outright annexation, and not of Lagos Island alone, but with enough land around it to make it easier to hold and to govern. Meanwhile, Beecroft had colluded with Commander Forbes to force action, since he already had Akintoye under his control. He took four warships to Lagos and called Kosoko to parley, saying that he thought a little show of force would frighten him into compliance. Kosoko was defiant and fired on the British party. Beecroft had no authority to start a war and he had to accept his humiliation. He was censured, but he had succeeded in getting the Commodore compelled to hasten action. Commodore Bruce came to Lagos the following month, and captured Lagos on Boxing Day, 1851, for the loss of 16 men dead, and 75 injured. The action covered only Lagos Island. Akintoye was reinstated. A trader was appointed acting Consul, pending the arrival of Benjamin Campbell, to oversee British interests in the Bight of Benin. The advice of Commodore Bruce that a candidate for the post be found from among the recaptives in Freetown or the West Indies was ignored. When Crowther returned to Lagos in June 1852, it was as an honoured guest at the palace of Akintoye, in the same Lagos from which he had been shipped as a slave bound for Brazil, 30 years before.

It did not take long for the wisdom of Commodore Bruce's caution to become apparent. As was often the case, as soon as the alliance of Mission and Empire achieved an immediate goal, the parties began to disagree on follow on action. Before the Consul could settle down, the missionaries moved into Lagos, and won concessions of the most attractive land, including choice sites on the Marina. The traders complained to the Admiralty that Gollmer, the missionary based at Badagri and closest to Akintoye, was mixing religion with politics and trade, and wasting the best commercial land for building churches, schools and mission houses, and even settling the recaptives from Badagri on land coveted by the traders. Venn asked Crowther to look into the dispute, and assist the Admiralty to resolve the problem. The traders found Akintoye nothing as energetic as Kosoko was in the promotion of trade. Some of the leading traders had withdrawn with Kosoko to Epe at the eastern end of the lagoon, to which place they were diverting trade. The same thing was happening in Badagri where the pro-Kosoko chiefs and principal traders had been driven out, taking their business with them to Porto Novo. Thus, as soon as one of the traders had the chance to act for the Consul, he countermanded any further delivery of arms to Abeokuta.

The traders could easily see the weakness of the missionary policy that concentrated British favours on the Egba. The traders wanted, as much as possible, to trade with everyone, or at least to be free to choose their allies as changing circumstances warranted. The traders saw things from the perspective of Lagos while the missionaries regarded Abeokuta as the centre and Lagos as merely its 'the natural port' and outlet. Even the missionaries located in Lagos, and those who began to occupy places further inland, especially Ibadan, Oyo and Ijaye, were also pointing out the inadequacy of the policy, especially when war broke out in 1860 between Ibadan and Ijaye, and the Egba decided to support Ijaye. It was Lagos, not Abeokuta, that must be seen as guarding the overland route to the Niger. The trade in Lagos was too important to be subordinated to Abeokuta's interest. The doctrinaire Buxtonian legitimate trade in agricultural goods produced by independent farmers - cotton, indigo, tobacco, arrowroot, coffee, etc. - was minor, and much less profitable, than the palm produce, ivory and shea butter that was the staple of

the trade in Lagos, as in the Niger Delta. In order to secure an official reversal of the Abeokutan policy, the traders continued to press the claims of Lagos trade on the Consul and the naval officers who visited, and cared to listen. They emphasised the need for firm government in order to curb the surreptitious slave trade still going on. They continued to urge that Lagos should be annexed to the British crown and Dosumu, who had succeeded Akintoye, pensioned off.

The annexation of Lagos in August 1861 was the culmination of the joint effort of Mission and Empire. But when the Government decided on it, the missionaries were not consulted. Henry Venn said "The intelligence took us by surprise ... but looking at the event as accomplished, it must prove a great benefit to the mission and give it a stability which it could not otherwise have had. We pray to God to over-rule all to his glory"(cit. Ajayi, 1965, 193). Only Crowther who happened to have been in Lagos was involved. Indeed, he played a dual role. His old friend, Capt. John Glover, the new Governor invited him to witness the ceremony for signing the Deed of Cession. During the explanation and negotiation of the terms, Dosumu asked for an adjournment and sent for Crowther in the night for consultation in the palace. That was how Crowther came to sign the document as a witness, a document that Herbert Macaulay, his nationalist grandson was to challenge in the 1920s. At least in the short run, the Mission did not consider the annexation an advantage to the spread of the Gospel. Crowther confirmed that the annexation had bred suspicion among the people, not only in Abeokuta but also in Ibadan, Igbesa and other places as well, that missionaries were precursors of British rule. Venn obviously preferred the informal empire of Consuls, treaties and naval protection, because he considered that as more compatible with his policy of encouraging self-government and the growth of a Native Agency. In transforming the informal to the formal empire without consulting the Mission, Caesar did not behave like an enemy, beloved or otherwise. Rather, he behaved like a strange bedfellow, an estranged bedfellow, a polygamist husband perhaps, yielding sometimes to the Mission spouse, but often going his own way with other wives.

Slavery and Polygamy

What the manner and timing of the annexation of Lagos indicated was that the Empire used the Mission whenever necessary; but, whenever the Empire had a choice to make, the promotion of British trade would always take precedence over the needs and the views of the Mission. At such times, it was of course the Mission that always had to make the necessary adjustments. This can be illustrated in the various adjustments that the Mission had to make to their attitude to slavery to fit the changing needs and views of the Empire.

In Buxton's view, it was not any kind of trade that could be effective in destroying the slave trade at its source. It had to be trade based on the marketing of agricultural produce that came from the labour of independent farmers. Only such a trade could have a demonstration effect to show that the use of labour on the farm was more profitable than the sale of surplus labour to slave traders. There were other conditions. Ideally, legitimate traders should cut out the coastal chiefs who had constituted middlemen in the slave-trading era. They should penetrate into the interior and deal directly with independent farmers. That was why the Niger Expedition planned the Model Farm in the interior as an example to independent farmers. That was why the CMS tried to practice Buxtonian agriculture and trade, not in Lagos, but at Abeokuta. Manchester Evangelicals and other 'Friends of Africa', under the leadership of Thomas Clegg, were encouraged to promote the cultivation of cotton, as an alternative to the US slave grown cotton. They were also to encourage the growth of a civilised Native Agency. Their agents were to be mission educated young men, not chiefs such as controlled the Liverpool-based palm oil trade in the Delta, under the same 'Trust' or credit system that prevailed in the slave trade era. Young men from the Mission, including Crowther's children, were recruited and trained in Britain to supervise the cultivation, harvesting, cleaning and preparation of cotton for export in bales. The banks of the River Ogun were cleared; the river landing place at Aro was built, and a road constructed to Abeokuta to take carts for carrying heavy goods like cotton gins. Progress was made, but the trade never became profitable. The Mission tried reorganization, adding on brick-making, carpentry, sawing of logs into planks, printing and other industrial arts.

Eventually, the Industrial Institution had to be moved to the warehouse in Lagos.

The traders making profit in Lagos were those dealing principally in palm produce. Paid labourers were scarce, as there was no tradition of free men selling their labour. It was therefore necessary to recruit 'domestic' slaves. As long as there was a high demand for domestic slaves, there was bound to be a market for such slaves, and the distinction in such a market between slaves for export and those for work on farms and in the palm oil industry was not always clear. Hence the complaint of some Lagos traders that surreptitious slave trade for export was still going on, and could not be stopped in the absence of a firm government. It was clear by the 1860s, that the Buxtonian legitimate trade of Abeokuta, like the philanthropic trade of the Sierra Leone Company, had no future, and provided no pattern that could sustain a social revolution. Palm produce remained the staple of legitimate trade. Therefore, the first major effect of promoting legitimate commerce was the tremendous expansion of domestic slavery. It was the organized palm oil trade, rather than produce of independent farmers, which made the export of labour unnecessary. Usually, no one started a war in order to capture slaves for the domestic market. But, the continued series of wars fuelled the market in slaves. Successful warlords were those who controlled large numbers of slaves to produce food to feed the soldiers and other clients, to serve as soldiers and auxiliary forces and, above all, to produce the palm oil which they carried in puncheons to coastal depots to exchange for ammunition. We will explore the relationship between legitimate trade and domestic slavery further in the next lecture. What needs to be emphasized here is how rarely things turned out as planned, and how an anti-slavery movement ended up promoting widespread use of slaves in production in order to defeat the exportation of slaves. More than that, we need to consider the subtle influence of the economics of trade on the doctrines of the Mission. In mobilizing opinion against the slave trade and slavery, the impression was given that slavery was incompatible with scriptural injunctions to love one's neighbour. In the United States, some Evangelicals anxious to distinguish radical discipleship from mere Christianity refused to admit slave owners to baptism.

In Britain, there were no slave owners and the problem did not arise; besides, most people, even Evangelicals, were reluctant to admit that the generations who had been dealing in slaves were committing grievous sin against their neighbour. When the issue arose in the Mission field, the missionaries equivocated. The United Presbyterian Church in Scotland had in 1849 broken off communion with American Churches that tolerated slave owners. Waddell, their pioneer missionary in Calabar, argued in 1856 that if the Mission refused to admit slave owners, "we can form no Christian Church", and it would mean "we cannot accept as Christian brethren those whom our Lord receives and saves. ... You treat him as a heathen after he has believed in Jesus for salvation, and that for no fault of his own". When an Anglican bishop of Sierra Leone queried the toleration of slave owners, and domestic slavery in Abeokuta in 1856, Townsend sent to Crowther as the local expert. Crowther said that domestic slavery really was no slavery in the American sense: "slaves and masters ...eat out of the same bowl, use the same dress in common ... a slave can hardly be distinguished from a free man unless one is told". (cit. Ajayi, 1965, 103-105). The headquarters in Britain approved of these positions. What is surprising is that the headquarters did not accept similar arguments in dealing with the issue of polygamy.

Evangelical Christians in the mid-19th century Britain had enough controversies over issues such as whether marriage contracts could be secular, and whether secular authorities could dissolve Christian marriages. They recognized the complexity of dealing with such problems that could not be resolved in a day. Yet they expected converts from other cultures to accept the current Anglican positions on such controversial matters. When Crowther said that he approached the issue of polygamy as he did that of slavery, namely, to demand from converts seeking baptism no more than the 'minimum qualifications necessary for salvation' -

That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well (Acts 15, 29).

And that he did not interfere with local customs and practices 'which Christianity after a time will abolish'. Venn immediately hushed him up with the argument that "Christ regarded polygamy as adultery". Whatever be the prevalent custom of a nation, the

Ordinance of God could not be lowered to it; there must be one standard for the Church everywhere, as God could not condemn polygamy in an old-established Church and accept it in a new one. Crowther shut up, and even recanted: "I have never at any time had a doubt in my mind as to the sinfulness of polygamy, and as contrary to God's holy ordinance from the creation and confirmed in the time of the flood." (Ajayi, 1965, 106). When Venn's memorandum of 1857 came up for discussion at the Lambeth conference of 1888, Crowther was one of its stout defenders. The implication that polygamy could initially have been regarded in the way that Paul regarded circumcision, and then allowed spiritual growth in the Church and social and economic forces of modernization to reduce it, was not considered. But evidently the matter remained unresolved in his mind. He said later that he could not use the Anglican liturgy to conduct a marriage for non-literate parishioners since they could not truthfully swear that they were endowing the wife with all their worldly goods, which was mostly land that belonged to the whole extended family unit. Archdeacon Dandeson Crowther, his son went further in the attempt to rationalize the Anglican position. He said that he had no problem with the fate of wives divorced by a polygamist seeking baptism, because such wives were no wives but slaves! The absurdity of that rationalization seems to imply that, in his heart, the Anglican position was absurd. In practice, the Churches were not able to enforce the rule against polygamy. Often the Churches have connived at the most powerful members having other wives, or allowing them to remain in the Church, and hold office if necessary, but deny access to the holy communion.

The Message of Power

In preaching the Gospel in the Yoruba country, especially in the period 1852-62, the Mission had many advantages. The most important was the return of the recaptives who were the ones who brought the missionaries after them. The Yoruba could not but appreciate the benevolence of the white man who risked his life to bring a message of peace to a people suffering so much from an unending series of wars. Many Yoruba had come to believe that the traditional gods, as agents of Olorun, the Almighty, had failed the people. One reason for the plurality of the gods, in the first place, was that different individuals and communities made their choice as to which of the gods worked best for the individual or community concerned. Sometimes the god was selected by divination at birth, sometimes by a trial and error process. What each individual or community was looking for was the god most able to exert power on one's behalf, or in one's favour. The search for power was the whole essence of religion and worship, and of prayer as the vehicle of that search. A god who could not come to one's aid in times of crisis, such as serious illness or other misfortune, was a useless god, and the smart individual or community did not hesitate to try other gods. Many were willing, therefore, to try the God the missionaries talked about.

The Yoruba were impressed not only by the benevolence of the white man but also by his knowledge and ability to make things. They were particularly impressed by the book and the written word as a way of communication such that a person at a great distance could hear the words and read the thoughts of another. For it was in that way that the recaptives came back speaking the

white man's language, and the white man came speaking the Yoruba language. The work of translation was thus of great advantage to the Mission. There was a large concentration of Europeans involved in the study, each making his own contribution: Townsend with his printing press and monthly newspaper in Yoruba; Charles Gollmer helping to revise translations for linguistic consistency; David Hinderer, the Mission expert in Hebrew, supervising translations of the Old Testament books, and whose translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is still used today; Adolphus Mann, another German linguist, collecting Yoruba prayers and religious literature; Thomas Jefferson Bowen, the American Baptist, bringing American linguistics to supplement European linguistics in the study of Yoruba, but whose *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* was locked away in the huge volumes of the Smithsonian *Contributions to Knowledge*. The Mission also had the largest concentration of native speakers of Yoruba among the agents as schoolmasters, catechists and ordained Ministers, with Crowther at their head. The quality of Crowther's translations was acknowledged even by his critics, and the Yoruba Bible has won universal approval by the Yoruba themselves for communicating the Message of the Gospel, starting a literary tradition and, in effect, initiating a renaissance of the language.

One serious handicap the Mission noted but did not explore in depth was the close relationship between religion and healing in Yoruba thought. In the concept of the power of the gods, the power to heal was of the utmost importance, not only to heal sickness, but generally to make whole, heal social relationships, prevent misfortune, heal situations, etc. In the process of healing, herbs were used, but there was no reliance on the curative properties of the medicines. Healing came from the power, not of the medicine, but of the gods. In a real sense then, healing was miraculous and was accessed by faith. That may be one reason why the area of Western medicine that appealed most to the Yoruba in that period was inoculation, particularly against smallpox. It was like an amulet, claiming no curative power of its own, but a defensive armour whose power depended on its being taken on faith. The missionaries were ambiguous as to whether they relied on the scientific properties of their medication or on the power of God to heal. This ambiguity,

and the high mortality rate among the missionaries themselves when compared, for example with Muslim priests or even traditional herbalists and diviners, created doubt as to the efficiency of their God in healing. This was a handicap. The efforts to promote western medicine in its stage of development, and to impress people with the scientific and industrial power of Britain, did little to reduce the handicap. The Yoruba were much more open to the doctrine preached later about faith healing as part of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, it must be acknowledged that with all their advantages, the missionaries were, on the whole, disappointed at the results they achieved. They discovered that they succeeded in converting several individuals, usually outsiders to the community or people with some family problem or the other that the missionaries helped to solve. The most notable example was Adolphus Mann who complained that the Mission made no headway in Ijaye because the ruler was a tyrant, a warlord who centralised all power - political, social, economic and religious - in his own hands and did not countenance rivalry. But when Ijaye was besieged, several boys were committed to his charge. Before the town fell in 1862, he was able to evacuate 70 of the boys to make a new start at Abeokuta. And when the missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta, he evacuated them to the Lagos mainland to make a new start at a new Ijaye. Only occasionally, as with Hinderer at Ibadan, and the Baptist William Clarke at Ogbomoso, did the missionary make a lasting impression by converting whole extended families. The Mission had no success with whole communities. Perhaps that was to be expected with the fragmentation and rivalries within the Mission. Perhaps the missionaries were too impatient: they set their expectations too high because of the warm welcome they received. It is not surprising that it should take more than a generation for a people to decide not only to give up their beliefs but also to accept significant modifications to their traditional way of life. For example, they had to accept that individuals could embrace a new religion such that, if they died, they were not to be buried in the family household but in a separate

consecrated cemetery away 'in the bush'. The missionaries placed a great deal of hope on the schools and the new generation that would grow up.

The greatest disappointment of the missionaries came from the fact that Islam was spreading more rapidly among the Yoruba, before their very eyes, and with nothing of the advantages that the Christian missionaries could claim. There were no obvious sponsors, sending money and other resources. Every itinerant Muslim trader seemed to have been an evangelist. Most of them could not read the Koran in Arabic, and always appreciated the English translations that the missionaries distributed. And they did not attempt to translate the Koran into Yoruba. Crowther enjoyed the intellectual encounters with Muslims, but he rarely won any Muslim over to Christianity. What disturbed him most was that he sometimes lost individuals he was hoping to convert to the Muslims. There was a particular *babalawo* - traditional healer, diviner and intellectual - whom he befriended. He gradually led him to see the falsity of the traditional religion and, just when he expected him to commit himself to follow Jesus, he came to announce that he had become a Muslim. Crowther mentioned his frustration to his Bible class, and they had to encourage him not to feel too disappointed since the Christians had other successes to show. In their analysis, the missionaries found an easy explanation for the greater success of Islam. First, was the willingness of Muslims to accept the inquirer into the Muslim community without preconditions. The new convert was given time to grow in the new religion, while still testing and reserving the right to change his or her mind. More importantly, the missionaries blamed their disappointing results on the issue of polygamy. Rather than question the way the Mission handled the matter, they tended to conclude that the Yoruba, like other Africans, stuck out for polygamy because they were more lecherous and sexually promiscuous than white men. Many Africans are known to try to live up to the reputation.

The disappointing results in the face of Islam cannot be put down to any one reason, but perhaps the interaction between Mission and Empire should be looked at even in this connection. There is no doubt that the close association with the Empire affected the doctrines that the missionaries emphasised. It

also affected how they presented their message, how the missionaries were themselves perceived and, to some extent, how their message was received. It was in the close association with the Empire that Christendom became identified with the industrial might of Victorian England. The missionaries implicitly accepted this and used the success and achievements of Britain as argument why the God of the British was superior and much to be preferred to the gods of the Heathen. That was implied in Buxton's package of Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation. Christianity was packaged with a particular kind of commerce based on the hope of industrialising agriculture, and a civilisation stressing the advances in science and technology. In their earlier period, this identification was unquestioned. In the Henry Venn years, the close relationship was welcomed and openly exploited and, at the same time, constantly questioned and kept under review. After the great success of invoking the Abeokuta policy to get the British to occupy Lagos - which soon led to annexation - Venn was very happy, but also very cautious.

Crowther was still in London when action was taken in Lagos over Christmas 1851. He left in January 1852, spent some time in Freetown, and did not arrive in Lagos until June. Venn forwarded what he called "a most important letter" from Lord Palmerston to Crowther. "It is a document wh. will be of the utmost service to you as evincing recognition and approval of our work by H. M. Government. You will be able to show it to Capt. Beecroft & when translated, it will be well to summon the chiefs together & read it to them in public". At the same time, Venn regretted the loss of lives in the action, and began to urge the missionaries to distance themselves from politics. He suggested that Gollmer "has been too mixed up with politics in Badagry" and should move to Abeokuta to do "simple missionary work. ... Nothing, however, can be done till your arrival. ... Upon your arrival, it will be necessary to hold a special Committee of the whole body to consult upon the altered position of affairs." Venn was writing to Crowther as if expecting him to assume leadership of the Mission. The letter was enough to raise the jealousy of Townsend who regarded the Abeokutan policy as his own specific contribution, but it was Crowther who met the Queen and received a letter

from the Prime Minister. But at Abeokuta, Crowther did not have the status that he had in London, or in Venn's mind. At any rate, Gollmer could not leave a vacuum in Lagos while waiting for Crowther's arrival. He moved quickly taking up land that traders coveted. What is important here was Venn's insistence, in his letter to Crowther dated March 15, 1852:

What is our hope founded upon? Only upon mercy of the Lord; that he may give your countrymen wisdom. And why? Because of the Gospel which is coming there. That is the jewel for the sake of which the Lord is working these wonders in your land. Therefor [sic], as a Patriot & as a Christian Minister, I urge you, dear Brother, to honour the gospel. Let not political affairs or any degree of temporal assistance which you may receive from the navy of Great Britain obscure the importance of your true Palladium - The Truth of the Gospel. The Lord our God is a jealous God. If he sees our missionaries trusting to an arm of flesh, or thinking more highly of temporal prosperity than of spiritual life, he will humble us, & shew that it is not for our sake, but for the sake of Christ's kingdom that he putteth down one and setteth up another.

It was not every missionary who could maintain the delicate balance that Venn prescribed, or be in the situation where it could be maintained. In 1854, when an attack on Lagos was expected from Kosoko, Consul Campbell offered some ammunition to defend CMS House, which he said was 'the only place in Lagos capable of making a defensive stand'. I think it can be said that Crowther shared Venn's views on this matter. In any case, his own natural humility and the attitudes of people in the Mission, notably Townsend, did not allow the extent of official recognition he received in Britain to get into his head. Venn recruited Dr Edward Irving, an Evangelical, a surgeon from the navy, to take charge of the political and temporal affairs of the Mission, and give some lessons in medical practice to the students at the training institution. When Dr Irving died after a year, Samuel Crowther Junior, his assistant held the fort until Dr A. A. Harrison and his wife came to replace him. It was difficult for the ordained Ministers not to become involved in political affairs, either with the local authorities or with the representatives of the British Government, or with the traders. Even if they did, the people could not make the mental separation between Crowther the Minister and Crowther Junior, the acting political agent who ran a clinic. The vital point was that Crowther's *babalawo* seeking power, was making perhaps the more important distinction

between the white man's predictable power accessible through the favour of white men, and the unpredictable power of God to perform miracles accessible only by faith and belief. It is remarkable that people would rather opt for faith in amulets as symbols of that power than on the word of the missionary, unsupported by such symbols. Often, when people were told not to put their faith in amulets, they were able to hold the Bible, or portions of it, in place of such symbols.

In summary, it can be said that, apart from outsiders and underprivileged people in society, the missionaries failed to wean the traditional rulers and civil chiefs away from clinging on to traditional beliefs and practices. On the other hand, the warriors, even those mobilising forces to contain the Muslim state of Ilorin and trying to roll back the invasion of the jihaddists, began to embrace Islam. This was obvious in Abeokuta, but particularly so in Ibadan, where the dominance of the warrior class was more complete. The warrior ruler of Ibadan declared for Islam in 1875, and no Christian was appointed ruler until 1952. Later, in the period of colonial conquest in the 1890s, when the Ijebu army was defeated, the mass of the people opted for the advantages that identification with Christianity would bring under colonial rule. The defeated warriors as a group, with their families, opted for Islam.

Constrained Episcopacy

In Venn's view, the most glorious day a missionary could ever hope to witness was the day he could see a Native succeed him as head of a new Church that he founded and was now self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. He did not seem to realise how difficult it was for missionaries to accept such euthanasia of the Mission. It was possible, if the new head had been a subaltern, like Olubi was to Hinderer in Ibadan, not a colleague and a rival like Crowther was to Townsend. Even then, euthanasia was acceptable to humble missionaries like Hinderer, provided the new head did not assume a status higher than their own. It was certainly not acceptable to an ambitious, power seeking man like Townsend, to agree to serve under Crowther as a Native bishop.

Venn was aware of Townsend's ambitions. From the start, Townsend had assumed that, as the pioneer Anglican missionary in the Yoruba Mission, he should have been recognised as leader over German and African colleagues who were ordained before him, and who were older and more experienced.

Venn had once or twice called on Crowther to make peace in the Mission, not only settling quarrels between Gollmer and Townsend, but also between both and the recaptives who felt insulted or discriminated against. Venn was aware that Townsend had constituted himself into an opposition against his plans for developing a Native Agency, whether in the Church or outside it. Townsend said that the Mission did not require a training institution, because he could train all the assistants they needed by apprenticeship. That, he said, would be one way to "check that pride of dress and caste that unhappily sometimes obtains with the African so that, if driving a nail would save a door from falling off its hinges, his own hands could not drive it". Venn ignored not only the opposition, but also the stereotyping of 'the African'. Besides the young men that the Native Agency Committee were grooming to be independent lay men in the Mission, Venn selected T. B. Macaulay from Fourah Bay for an academic training. He sent him to the CMS Training Institution at Islington, and then for a year at King's College, London. Macaulay was to work under Paley, a graduate of Cambridge and grandson of the famous Evangelical theologian, to start the Training Institution at Abeokuta. Paley arrived with his wife and an English maid in January 1853. He died in April, and his wife and the maid returned to England. Macaulay took charge of the Institution, but Townsend removed him from there, saying he was unsuitable. He said there was no place for him in the Yoruba Mission and suggested he should be sent to the Freetown Grammar School. He opposed the ordination of Macaulay and Thomas King when the Bishop of Sierra Leone came to Abeokuta in 1854, saying "I have a great doubt of young black clergymen. They want years of experience to give stability to their characters; we would rather have them as schoolmasters and catechists". Meanwhile, Macaulay was sent to hold the fort as pastor of the Church at Owu, in Abeokuta. Of course, Townsend found him unsuitable there and asked him to report to Hinderer in Ibadan. Hinderer pleaded that Macaulay's talents would be wasted in Ibadan, and that he should be allowed to go and open a Grammar School in Lagos, rather than losing him to Sierra Leone. It was then that Crowther, who had become Macaulay's father-in-law, intervened to persuade Venn to allow Macaulay to raise some capital from Lagos merchants in Lagos to start a

Grammar School. The Lagos Grammar School was opened in 1859 and T. B. Macaulay was Principal for 20 years till his death in 1878.

Townsend had never hidden his ambition to be head and, if possible, Bishop over the Yoruba Mission. As early as 1851, when Crowther was summoned to meet the Prime Minister and the Queen, Townsend imagined that it was to discuss the issue of a black Bishop demanded for Abeokuta by an influential member of the CMS. Townsend got his three colleagues to join him in petitioning against the possible appointment of a black bishop. Two of the colleagues were Gollmer and Hinderer, with Lutheran background, and did not believe in episcopacy on ecclesiastical grounds. Townsend's argument was that whites must lead blacks because Africans themselves did not want blacks to lead: "Native teachers of whatever grade [i.e. including Crowther] have been received and respected by the chiefs and people only as being the agents or servants of white men". Townsend could not do things by halves, and he carried his racist arguments to logical conclusions:

As the negro feels a great respect for a white man, God kindly gives a great talent to the white man in trust to be used for the negro's good. Shall we shift the responsibility? Can we do it without sin? (cit. Ajayi, 1965, 181-2).

It was because of this racist attitude that Venn could never trust Townsend with leadership. Yet he allowed him to go on frustrating plans for reorganising the Yoruba Mission and providing it with a bishop as efficient co-ordinator and leader.

The arguments about the bishopric were resumed ten years later. In 1860, after the third Bishop of Sierra Leone died on his way from the Yoruba Mission, or soon after arrival, the name of Crowther was again being mentioned as a possible successor. Venn said it was with difficulty that he persuaded the Colonial Secretary to leave Crowther alone for service on the Niger. Crowther had started the Niger Mission in 1857. He left the Rev. J. C. Taylor, born in Sierra Leone of Igbo parents, to get the Onitsha Mission going, and Thomas King at Igbebe, as Secretary of the Mission. The *Dayspring*, the vessel that took members of the Niger Expedition, ran aground near Jebba, and there was no way of re-floating it until the rainy season of the following year. Crowther took the opportunity to build some huts as an outpost in Rabba in the Fulani quarter of the old Nupe capital. Crowther found the experience

very trying, being encamped for almost a year with the "mixed body of men of different characters, temper, view and aim and mostly of no Christian principles". He went with the rescue boat to Onitsha, and from there he found transport back to Lagos. When he returned to the Niger in 1859, he found transport to Onitsha. From there he went by canoe all the way to Rabba where the new Nupe ruler provided horses to take the party by land all the way back to Lagos. He was about 54 years old, tired and exhausted. He pleaded that as soon as the stations at Onitsha, Igbebe and possibly Idah were well established, he would like to resign the arduous task of leading the Niger Mission: "Then I should like to spend the remainder of my days among my own people, pursuing my translations as my bequest to the nation". That was when Venn had to bring up the issue of the Bishopric:

The Lord has honoured you by making you his instrument for opening the Niger to the Gospel. Should a native Church be established there, and should He call you to preside as a missionary bishop, you would not be the person to run away like Jonah. (cit. Ajayi, 1965, 185).

The expression Missionary Bishop summed up most of the ambiguities in the relationship between Mission and Empire which, in turn, defined the Mandate of Bishop Crowther. The Niger Mission remained an exercise in trying to fulfil the dreams of Buxton and the anti-slavery movement in the Niger Expedition of 1841. The Mission alternative of building up a chain of mission stations from Lagos, through Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ogbomoso to Ilorin and Rabba did not materialise. The coastal people remained hostile to the idea of being bypassed and having their middleman position undermined. The Niger Mission still relied on Government subsidy to enable Macgregor Laird to provide a boat annually, with a gunboat from the navy as armed escort. Crowther gathered a large party of 65 people, including some white mechanics as lay agents, carrying iron houses and other equipment. They waited at Akassa, at the mouth of the Niger, with the aim of making an impressive beginning in the Niger Mission. After waiting in vain for three months for the armed escort, the party had to disperse. It was at that point that, to make a virtue of necessity, Venn decided to make the Niger Mission an all African affair. It was to accept the challenge of Townsend and other

scoffers that a Native Church without European leadership could not work. Townsend had dissuaded white mechanics from going to the Niger because, he said, that the phenomenon of 'inferior Europeans' working under a black person was calculated to boost the image of the black leader. Yet, a Native Church on the Niger did not make sense unless it was viewed as an extension of the Sierra Leonean or the Yoruba Mission.

It was only because of the close relationship between Mission and Empire that the anomaly of the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Sierra Leone over the Yoruba Mission was allowed to continue. For transport and health reasons, the Bishop of Sierra Leone was rarely able to visit the Yoruba Mission. Without such episcopal visit, members could not be confirmed or pastors ordained. The anomaly became more confused when Lagos became a colony, but was denied its own Bishop so that Lagos should continue to subsidise the Bishop of Sierra Leone for services he was unable to render to the Yoruba Mission. It was also one of the ways in which through the activities of the navy, the Consul and the Lagos Governor, the whole of Southern Nigeria was already in that ambiguous relationship called the Informal Empire. Then there is the ambiguity of language and culture to which we referred earlier. Venn made no distinction between peoples on the Niger who, as Africans, were Crowther's people; and the Yoruba whom Crowther called his "own people". Because of that confusion, Crowther continued to talk of establishing a Native Church on the Niger. It was only if Crowther had been made Bishop over the Yoruba Mission that the Niger Mission, as an extension of the Native Church in the Yoruba Mission could claim to be a Native Church. Venn had obviously thought of that. It was largely the wars in the interior that prevented the overland route from being fully developed. That left the situation in the Yoruba Mission ambiguous, and it also made the situation in the Niger Mission no less ambiguous.

A missionary bishop, that is a bishop leading a party of missionaries to found a church, was a High Church idea that Venn had specifically attacked for confusing the roles of pastor and missionary. The appointment of a bishop is supposed to be the final end of a Mission ready for euthanasia, when the church had been formed, a Native clergy had been raised, and the leader of

the Native clergy takes over from the missionaries as the head of a self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing church. Venn used the expression to mean a bishop of the Anglican Church in a non-British territory. As bishop within the established Anglican Church, he was appointed by law, based on Letters Patent signed by the Queen as Head of both Church and State, but without a law in Parliament as such a bishop did not have a right to the membership of the House of Lords. The ability of the Queen or Parliament to make a law that was valid in a non-British was first tried in Jerusalem in 1841. That is why the missionary bishop is sometimes called the Jerusalem bishop. The ambiguities, anomalies, and even absurdities involved will be explored further in the next lecture. What needs to be emphasised here is that Townsend, in his determination to block the development of the Translator, did more than prevent the full development of Native Agency. He thwarted, and was allowed to thwart the euthanasia of the Mission and the full development of the new Church.

Summary

Let us attempt to summarise the argument so far. We saw in the first lecture that Sierra Leone was a child of Philanthropy, Philanthropy on the scale that had to involve Mission and Empire being closely identified. We tried to argue that the close relationship existed in practice, and was taken for granted without much contention. In this second lecture, we have tried to show that the close relationship between Mission and Empire continued in practice, but it was more openly discussed. The Mission as represented by the Missionary Society and the missionaries in the field often agonised about the effects of mixing religion and politics and trade. We have tried to show the effects on the doctrines and attitudes of the Mission, especially in relation to the issue of slavery. Venn wanted to maintain a balance. He therefore tried to raise up a Native Agency who could promote self-government among their own people. For this purpose, Venn preferred to cooperate with the Empire to establish an Informal Empire in which the missionaries guiding the growth of a Native Agency could retain considerable influence. Townsend did not believe in a Native Agency. He pioneered the policy of Indirect Rule, sidelining the rising educated elite,

and controlling power through exerting influence over the chiefs. A group among the rising educated elite exploited divisions and contradictions in Abeokuta, and quarrels with Lagos, to get Townsend and other Europeans expelled from Abeokuta.

Caesar had no problems with using the Mission to create the Informal Empire, but as a cheaper method of beginning the journey to a Formal Empire in which the Mission could retain influence only on terms and conditions set by Caesar.