

THE VICTORIAN MISSIONARY

THE EVOLUTION OF A MOVEMENT

i. *Where Protestant Mission had Arrived by the 1840s*

On 7 January 1844 Johann Krapf arrived in Zanzibar, the first modern missionary in eastern Africa. A German from Württemberg, educated in the University of Basel, he was employed by the Anglican Church Missionary Society like a good number of other German missionaries. His five years in Ethiopia, hoping to develop in Shoa a base for a mission to the rest of Africa, especially the Galla, had ended in expulsion. He had shared the old dream of Ludolf in the seventeenth century—to Christianize Africa through Ethiopia. It was, however, as impractical in the nineteenth century as it had been in the seventeenth. Krapf's arrival at Zanzibar represents his extrication from participation in a very ancient history and insertion instead as East African pioneer within a new history which was just at that moment bursting into a first round of wide-scale achievement. For the next thirty years Krapf and his colleague and successor Rebmann would be based in Mombasa while patiently exploring both its hinterland and, still more important, East Africa's coastal languages. They completed a translation of the New Testament into Swahili while beginning work as well on Nyika, Kamba, and other tongues.

At just the same time, J. F. Schön, another Basel graduate and CMS employee and an equally able linguist, was doing the same on the West Coast for Hausa and Igbo, while Samuel Crowther, his African colleague, recently ordained by the Bishop of London, was at work on the Yoruba New Testament. Further along the coast in Cameroon, the Jamaican Baptist mission begun in 1843 produced four years later a translation of Matthew's Gospel into Isubu, made by the Jamaican Joseph Merrick, and, in 1848, another into Duala by the English missionary, Alfred Saker. South, in Kuruman, Moffat's

Sechuana New Testament had been completed by 1840. In 1847 David Livingstone settled at Kolobeng, several hundred miles to the north of Kuruman, the most forward point reached hitherto by what had now become a very extensive network of southern African missions. In Natal, the American Board of Missions was busy establishing a number of stations, while Norwegian Lutherans were just beginning to do the same in Zululand. Back in the west the first inland mission north of the Equator was established in 1846 by Henry Townshend and Crowther at Abeokuta.

The point demonstrated by these various facts is that the 1840s witnessed the penetration of the continent by an army of earnest Protestant missionaries to a degree hitherto unprecedented. Some were incompetent enough, some were cantankerous, many died. Nevertheless, there was already a smell of a breakthrough in the air, and, while a generation earlier the missionary had been at home an object of ridicule or mistrust, a low-class religious fanatic attempting the absurd if not the undesirable, now he was starting to be seen instead as the hero of both religious and secular achievement. That was true even before Livingstone arrived back in Britain in 1856 from his trans-African journey to take the nation by storm. 'Conversions' might be few, but the sharp edge of the work, and it would prove a sharper one than any could have guessed, was the linguistic edge. What was already beginning to make a decisive difference to Africa by 1850 was the diffusion of copies of the New Testament, of hymn-books, prayer-books, and what have you (including, quite soon, a series of versions of *Pilgrim's Progress*) in a number of important languages. In none of them had anything hitherto been printed, and in very few had anything ever been written. This beginning to a popular literature would provide not only a tool for each future wave of missionaries to use and extend, but also, far less predictably, an autonomous instrument of Christianization of immense authority, at once Western and native. Modernization would go with reading, and reading meant acculturation into the world of Christian literature and ideas. Alternative literature there was none. The 1840s saw established a novel form of influence which would, over the next 100 years, continually grow in quantity and remain almost unchallenged.

The missionary movement was, then, by 1850, becoming more than it realized a truly creative force within African history, the provider of much that was genuinely new and revolutionary, both mental and material, things that neither African societies themselves,

nor the old Catholic missionaries, nor European traders and consuls had, or could, provide. It was already a more important, and less easily labelled, force than modern secular historians mostly admit. How had it come to develop and what were its characteristics? It is not too easy to answer either of those questions. Post-Reformation Protestantism had for centuries remained rather strangely uninterested in missionary or evangelical responsibility towards non-Christian peoples. There were a few exceptions, especially in North America, but even the SPG, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, founded in England in 1701, had in practice almost wholly limited its interest to the pastoral care of the English overseas. No organization or movement had in any way felt committed to a mission of evangelization of the non-Christian before the Moravians in Germany in the eighteenth century, and they were tiny in number, a group of communitarian pietists. From them, however, a missionary consciousness began to spread more widely in Germany and then also in England towards the close of the eighteenth century. The impact both of the Evangelical Movement and of ever wider contacts between Europe, Britain especially, and the non-Western world must have contributed to produce this change. Nevertheless, like so many spiritual and cultural movements, it remains far from clear why the Protestant missionary movement came just when it did and, then, so very fast.

The Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792, was the first of what soon would become a multitude. It had been stimulated by William Carey, a Northamptonshire cobbler, who at once set off for India. The inaugural meeting consisted of a dozen people gathered in a back parlour in Kettering. Other Free Churchmen picked up the enthusiasm from the Baptists and established the non-denominational London Missionary Society in 1795. This time the inaugural meeting was held at the Castle and Falcon public house in Aldersgate. The point to be noted is that the missionary movement began in Britain as a working-class initiative, far removed from universities, the wealthy, or the State Church. Both Edinburgh and Glasgow saw the founding of societies in 1796. Upper-class, evangelical Anglicans centred upon the Clapham group did not want to be outdone, so the Church Missionary Society was created in 1799. As important as anything, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804 with the specific task of ensuring the translation and printing of the Scriptures. In 1810 a Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

(the ABCFM) was set up in the United States. In England the Wesleyan Methodists founded their own society in 1813. Next year the first of the German societies was established at Basel. A little later came Berlin and Paris, Leipzig and Bremen. What in 1780 existed in the Protestant world as at most the rather idiosyncratic concern of a handful of Moravians was by 1840 central almost to the very *raison d'être* of all the mainline Churches as understood by their more lively and enthusiastic membership.

It is true that these were private societies set up mostly by lay people. Bishops were distinctly slow to share in the new enthusiasm, just as they had, for instance, been slow to share in any enthusiasm for the friars in the thirteenth century. It required all Wilberforce's tact over many months to secure a very moderate measure of non-disapproval of the CMS at its foundation from the Archbishop of Canterbury. It would be 1815 before a couple of bishops could be persuaded to join the Society's vice-presidents. Only in 1841 did the Archbishop of Canterbury accept an *ex officio* role in the Society and the bishops as a whole give it their patronage. A State Church found it hard to see the propriety of being a missionary Church. There could, nevertheless, be no going back on a phenomenon which not only sparked off a growing wave of populist spiritual enthusiasm but also reflected only too well the increasing sense of world hegemony and responsibility entrusted not just to Great Britain but to Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. A world missionary outlook suited a Britain which now ruled the best part of India, the West Indies, Australia, Canada, Cape Colony, and much else. London was becoming, every year more consciously, the world's imperial and intellectual capital. In an age of evangelical seriousness it could hardly avoid taking up the burden of a world-wide religious responsibility as well.

The early missionary movement, however, was not, at least consciously, an aspect of British imperial expansion. It spread without the slightest need for adaptation to quite un-British lands like Norway or anti-British lands like America. It is true that British governors, both in Sierra Leone and in Cape Colony, expected to use missionaries as their agents for various tasks both inside and outside the borders of the colony and that missionaries often accepted such responsibilities, but, at least at times, they did it somewhat reluctantly and awkwardly. If they were British, they came mostly from the Free Churches and in no way from the governing classes. If not British, they were even less likely to wish to be identified with the colonial

government. At times, perhaps, they relished it somewhat naïvely just because in background they were so socially insignificant. Some mid-Victorian missionaries, British Methodists and German Lutherans as much as Anglicans, were naturally erastian and glad enough to have a colonial role, but their conception of Christianity was for the most part highly other-worldly in message and congregationalist in form.

While the upper-class Evangelicals who had founded the CMS were Anglicans of the political class, such people did not themselves contemplate for a moment becoming missionaries. Somewhat to their disappointment, they found that their reluctance was shared even by Anglicans of a humbler sort. Indeed for quite a while recruitment among the clergy seemed well-nigh impossible. It was therefore convenient to find that Germans were both more amenable and already being rather well prepared for mission in Basle and Berlin, and quite a few were recruited for CMS employment. After 1820 the CMS, sensitive to a certain awkwardness in an Anglican missionary society spreading Christianity by means of Lutherans, managed to increase the supply of English missionaries, but few were of the calibre of the Germans. A training institute was opened at Islington in 1825 to polish up the British candidates, but even here its most distinguished students were largely German. It is striking how, as late as the great CMS mission of 1876 to the interior of East Africa destined for Buganda and Karagwe, in some ways one of the sagas of Anglican missionary history, there was only one Englishman—a young naval officer—in the original party of seven, and the only Anglican clergyman available was a still-younger Australian. The mission's key figure was a lay Scottish Calvinist deeply distrustful of the Church of England. Only in the 1880s did this really change on the Evangelical side. On the more Anglo-Catholic wing it had altered twenty years earlier with the foundation of the Universities Mission to Central Africa. It was doubtless the needs of India and elsewhere which through the middle decades of the century drained off such English Evangelical clergy of better education as did apply, but in African terms the effect was clear.

All this mattered the less in that, until the middle of the century, the missionary movement was a singularly non-denominational function of international Protestantism of a rather lay and individualistic sort. Its most characteristic organ in the early period was undoubtedly the London Missionary Society, and nearly all the LMS's ablest men were Scots. If the LMS sent out a Dutchman as its

pioneer to the Cape, or Philip, Moffat, and Livingstone, all Scotsmen, if the CMS sent out a succession of German Lutherans, it was all one. The political leadership of the movement could be English, its personnel German, Scottish, or, a little later, French, Scandinavian, or American. They were united in spreading a non-denominational Protestant gospel. There was much concern for Scripture, direct preaching, the personal experience of sin and of conversion; there was little concern for Church order or a liturgy other than the simplest. Effectively the missionaries became the clergy, African converts the laity, in a new kind of Presbyterianism, dependent for its existence on the control and financial support not of bishops but of a board in Europe. However, the high white mortality rate, the expense of supporting numerous missionaries, many of them married, and the obvious problem of language, all pointed to the need for something which soon came to be nominated, a trifle awkwardly, 'native agency'. It was more a matter of practical necessity than of theology or far-sighted strategy.

The 1840s, the first age in Africa of at least some signs of significant missionary success, was also the time when the first simple, almost undifferentiated character of the missionary movement began to alter and break apart. There were four factors making for this. One was the impact of theory, stress upon 'civilization' on the one side, on a more adaptive missiology upon the other. A second, connected both with the disastrous course of the 1841 Niger expedition, which reinforced recognition of the appallingly high missionary death-rate in West Africa, and with the increasing maturity of the Sierra Leone Church, was a sharp practical sense of the need for more, and properly trained, African agents, including ordained clergy. The third was the general multiplication, with overlapping and at times irritable friction, of missionary societies producing an inevitable denominationalism as a variety of Churches took root. The creation of Anglican bishoprics at Cape Town and Freetown towards the end of the decade (and others later) reflected the increasing acceptance of the missionary movement by the establishment in the Church of England and it provided a much needed authority for those concerned, but it also contributed to a larger division, creating an inevitable separation in ethos and Church order between Anglicans and others. Up to 1840 there is a sense of Protestant mission, anarchical but one. After the 1840s there is a sense rather of Anglican, Methodist, or Baptist missions, better disciplined but more divided.

ii. The Catholic Revival

The fourth factor producing change in the 1840s was the revival of Catholic mission. The old movement, which had begun in the sixteenth century, received new direction by the establishment in Rome of Propaganda Fide in the early seventeenth, and continued with little change, if declining momentum, into the late eighteenth, largely collapsed under the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Religious houses and seminaries were closed in most parts of Europe. Even the Roman Curia was for years disrupted. Only after Waterloo could recovery begin. It did so almost at once, but a great deal of leeway needed to be made up. The Society of Jesus was officially reconstituted in 1814 and new congregations of a more or less missionary nature were soon being founded, such as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Marseilles in 1816. In 1822 at Lyons a young laywoman, Pauline Jaricot, began a pious lay association named the Work for the Propagation of the Faith, a fund-gathering body which would spread throughout the Catholic world while retaining its headquarters in Paris, and provide the financial undergirding for the new missionary movement which was about to develop. But the shortage of clergy was so considerable in some parts of Europe and the demand was also so pressing in new emigrant areas, above all the United States, that it was only in the 1840s in the pontificate of Gregory XVI that a real impetus was once again given to the African mission.

Gregory, Pope from 1831 to 1846, had previously been Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda. An extreme conservative at home; his missionary commitment was outstanding and could lead even to seemingly radical actions such as the publication in December 1839 of the Apostolic Letter *In Supremo Apostolatus* condemning the slave-trade, something which too many Catholic countries were still very much abetting. While this was not a reversal of the previous papal position, it was a far more public and weighty statement of condemnation than anything that had gone before. It has to be said that it was, in part, a response to British pressure.

A Vicariate-Apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope was erected by Gregory in 1837, one for the 'Two Guineas' (effectively the whole west coast north of Angola) in 1842, another for Egypt in 1844, and a fourth for the Sudan or Central Africa in 1846. By 1850 the eastern Cape and Natal had become separate vicariates. Already de Jacobis

had landed at Massawa in 1839 while a remarkably mixed group of Jesuits, led by a Pole, Maximilian Ryllo, ascended the Upper Nile in 1847. Irish secular priests were dispatched to the eastern Cape, French Oblates of Mary Immaculate to Natal. Already a new Catholic missionary assault upon Africa was, then, well under way, but while the Protestant assault was centrally unplanned and largely under the management of a multitude of lay boards, the Catholic was far more centralized beneath the control of Propaganda Fide.

Doubtless anxiety about Protestant missionary progress helped stimulate the Catholic revival but, basically, it was simply the natural renewal of an activity which the Catholic Church had always regarded as crucial and which had only been, in part, abandoned under pressure of extraneous circumstances. The most influential single development within the revival was the foundation in France by Francis Libermann, a convert Jew, of a new *Congrégation*, the 'Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary', in 1840 and its merging a few years later with the far older, but almost defunct, *Congrégation* of the Holy Ghost, based in Paris. The amalgamated group took the name and buildings of the older society but the leader and orientation of the new one. It was to be a missionary congregation explicitly directed to Africa. Libermann was an outstandingly perceptive and charismatic figure, able to inject a new dynamism and a more specifically missionary spirituality into his group, but he died in 1852 when it was still just beginning.

Only a few years later, in 1854, another new society was founded for Africa in France, this time in Lyons, where the Association for the Propagation of the Faith was already centred. The Society of African Missions (SMA) owed its existence to Melchior de Marion-Bresillac, who had formerly been a missionary bishop in India. It took over from the Holy Ghost Fathers responsibility for a large central section of the west coast. De Bresillac and his first missionary party were wiped out by yellow fever in Freetown in 1859 only a few weeks after arrival, but a second party established itself at Ouidah on the coast of Dahomey in 1861 led by an Italian, Francesco Borghero. They had chosen Dahomey in preference to Sierra Leone as 'virgin territory', but the kingdom itself was firmly closed to missionaries and their establishment on the coast at Ouidah proved anything but virgin. It represented instead almost total continuity with the least effective Catholic presence of the past. The home of a Portuguese-speaking community of mixed blood and slave-trading traditions,

Ouidah was Christian enough to want a Catholic ritual presence and to tolerate a school for its children. Language-learning took second place.

Jean-Remi Bessieux, the Holy Ghost Congregation's pioneer on the west coast and Vicar-Apostolic of the Two Guineas, had already had a Pongwe grammar and a Pongwe-French dictionary printed at Amiens in 1847, indicative of the way some Catholics, no less than Protestants, were developing a greatly increased concern for African languages, but both at Ouidah and in South Africa the impression is one of a primary concern for people already somehow nominally Catholic because of European origin or mixed blood, and of a pattern of mission in practice rather little affected by the half-century of hiatus since the close of the eighteenth century. It would take another twenty years for new approaches to develop sufficiently to alter the character of the movement as a whole. They would be associated above all with the name of the French Archbishop of Algiers, Charles Lavigerie.

iii. *David Livingstone and his Influence*

On 9 December 1856 David Livingstone arrived in England, after fifteen years working for the LMS in southern Africa. He had just completed a crossing of the heart of the continent on foot from Loanda to Quelimane. Within a week he had addressed a special meeting of the Royal Geographic Society, followed the next day by another of the LMS, chaired by Lord Shaftesbury. Oxford and Glasgow presented doctorates, the Royal Society elected him a Fellow. Livingstone, by the force of his character, his almost indestructible physical constitution, his meticulous observations, climatic, botanic, and anthropological, relating to so much of Africa hitherto wholly unreported, his enormous and infectious sense of high purpose both religious and humanitarian, so vastly reinvigorated the missionary scene that its post-1856 history takes, for a good quarter-century, a decidedly post-Livingstonean character.

The Livingstone agenda was now more complex and even contradictory than the apparent simple honesty of the man might suggest. As an LMS missionary tied to a single station in southern Africa he had grown increasingly frustrated. Not for him the somewhat complacent perfectionism within one small location of his father-in-law, Robert Moffat. As a conventional missionary,

Livingstone had not been a success, and the ambitions of his restless soul were stung by bitterness both towards his fellow missionaries and towards the brutal injustices carried out by Boer farmers of the Transvaal upon their African neighbours. He was early convinced that Christianity would advance better with fewer missionaries and more 'native agency', but his own use of the latter had not worked happily for him. From being a failed local practitioner he turned himself by travelling into a continent-wide strategist. The great central mass of Africa north of Kolobeng remained untouched by missionary influence. His great journey demonstrated, he believed, that it was far less inaccessible than had appeared, a field full of receptive peoples threatened only by the continuance of the slave-trade.

As a young man, Livingstone had been present in Exeter Hall in June 1840 when the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa had celebrated its first anniversary in the presence of Prince Albert, Sir Robert Peel, Mr Gladstone, and a bevy of bishops. It was the meeting preparatory to the miscalculated and disastrous Niger Expedition of the following year, but its message of introducing Christianity and Civilization through Commerce had sunk deep into his mind, and now that he had returned to England seventeen years later it was flung forth again with all the authority of his unique experience, an authority which was, of course, wholly irrelevant to it.

Livingstone resigned from the London Missionary Society to become instead a British consul, a professional explorer, an anti-slave-trade propagandist, but, above all, a sort of honorary patron and guide to the missionary world generally, a world galvanized by his speeches and writings into a new frenzy of activity. 'Native agency' was henceforth less heard of in Livingstone circles than the advances of commerce, 'the preparation of the raw materials of European manufactures in Africa', as a better means to the 'larger diffusion of the blessings of civilization than efforts exclusively spiritual and educational'.¹ The Niger plan of 1841, he had come to believe, should somehow be resurrected on the Zambezi in 1860. His words of farewell in December 1857 in the Senate House in Cambridge remain the most memorable expression of mid-Victorian missionary zeal: 'I beg to direct your attention to Africa:—I know that in a few

¹ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), 24.

years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it to you.²

Livingstone excelled in the combination of rhetoric, ideology, and experience. Unfortunately he did not excel in realistic judgement and advice where other Europeans were concerned, yet his British achievement was extraordinary: the result of his year-long advocacy was not only a British government expedition up the Zambezi led by himself as Consul, not only two new LMS missions to be set up north and south of the Zambezi, but also the foundation of a wholly new missionary society—the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). It was a lot for one year. The Zambezi expedition was nearly an early disaster owing to the total navigational block, unsuspected by Livingstone, of the Cabora Bassa rapids, but the discovery of the Shire River and its way through to the Shire highlands and Lake Nyasa postponed the failure and provided a new focus of attention which would be important for the future. The missions, however, both LMS and UMCA, had been gravely misled and all three ventures proved appalling disasters. At the end of six years the Zambezi expedition was withdrawn by the British government after considerable loss of life, including that of Mrs Livingstone, and no start at all to Livingstone's dream of a commercial settlement in central Africa.

The pull of the deep interior was, nevertheless, now irresistible even if the following years witnessed a lull in grandiose plans. Livingstone's impact had established it as never before within the agenda of the European mind. He had also done two other things. He had greatly stimulated missionary interest among the upper class and graduates. The UMCA team of Bishop Mackenzie may not have been immediately better missionaries than men fifty years earlier. Their academic sensitivities certainly helped them avoid some of the earlier naïvetés, though they could also contribute to a profound impracticality. Not, of course, that they were the first graduates, even the first British graduates, to become missionaries in Africa. But UMCA's collective commitment pointed to a significant widening in those responding to the missionary call and not only within its own ranks. Livingstone's often repeated and somewhat sarcastic remark

² William Monk, *Dr Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures* (Cambridge, 1858), 24.

that a missionary is not just a dumpy little man with a Bible under his arm was sinking in. As the first UMCA men sailed up the Shire River they read to themselves not only Moffat's *Missionary Labours* but also Darwin's *Origin of Species*. They were exceptional. Most missionaries, even Cambridge graduates from the University's Eight, remained rather little affected by the more secularizing and critical aspects of late Victorian culture. Livingstone's third lasting contribution was to revive the commitment both to anti-slavery and to commerce as being conjunctive with the missionary movement, more so in fact than they had ever been in the past. Missionaries seem much more personally affected by anti-slavery sentiment in this second wave, relating to the east of the continent, than they had been in the first, western, wave. While this may have been a good thing the stress on commerce was almost certainly misguided. It appealed particularly to Scots.

The manifest failure of all the Livingstone initiatives in the Zambezi years did, nevertheless, leave the movement in some confusion. It came to be recognized that in practical terms he was an unreliable guide. It would all the same be the emotion stirred by his death in 1873, the amazing story of the transportation of his body by his servants across half the continent to Bagamoyo on the coast, and his burial in Westminster Abbey, which set off a new wave of inland mission across east and central Africa, the wave which would establish in large part its definitive ecclesiastical geography.

iv. Verona Fathers and White Fathers

Well before the death of Livingstone, however, two other African missionary societies were founded within the Catholic Church. Daniel Comboni was an Italian priest from the seminary of Verona which had accepted responsibility for reinforcing the Jesuits and Franciscans in the Upper Nile mission where the casualty rate was particularly high. Thus of five Slovene recruits who arrived in 1851, four were dead within four months. Faced with the futility of pouring in Europeans who died off as fast, Comboni again thought harder than most about how to develop instead an African ministry. His 'New Plan' suddenly came to him as a blinding intuition on 15 September 1864 in St Peter's, Rome: 'It flashed before my mind,'³ a

³ Pietro Chiocchetta, *Daniel Comboni: Papers for the Evangelization of Africa* (Rome, 1982), 93.

plan for the 'Regeneration of Africa by Africans'. European missionaries in Africa died. Africans selected for training in Europe also, only too often, died. If they did not, their training still proved both costly and ineffective. They seldom wanted to return home. If they did return, they could fail to fit in. Comboni's 'New Plan' was essentially to leave the conversion of Africa to Africans who had been prepared for it within Africa but in the more temperate zones. It seemed a sensible idea; to him it was a revelation from God. Initially two institutions were opened in Cairo in 1867, one for boys, one for girls. Comboni appealed for their support in a moving petition to the first Vatican Council in 1870. Yet the Cairo schools were themselves not a great success, and what came out in due course from Comboni's 'New Plan' was simply the establishment of the two missionary societies of Verona, one for priests, the other for nuns. Their principal field of work would remain the Upper Nile, and their missionary approach would be no different from that of others, canon law proving more powerful than blinding intuition. What would alter Catholic missionary achievement between the middle and the late nineteenth century was less a revolutionary change of method—wonderful as that might have been, if genuinely applied—than quinine, railways, and European administration.

Further to the west, however, a somewhat more revolutionary initiative was developing. In 1867 Charles Lavigerie was appointed Archbishop of Algiers, hitherto a position of little importance and one concerned with not much more than the chaplaincy of French settlers. But Lavigerie was an exceptional person both in intelligence, at once learned and imaginative, and in an ambitious forcefulness. He was to prove the most outstanding Catholic missionary strategist of the nineteenth century, determined to turn his see of Algiers into something of continental significance. In 1868 he founded yet another society, the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa, soon to become known as the White Fathers on account of the Arab dress they were given to wear. The White Sisters followed. More consistently than any one else Lavigerie insisted on a strategy of adaptation in clothes, language, food. It did not, however, include theological adaptation. The White Fathers, like all the new Catholic missionary societies of the nineteenth century, were theological ultramontanes. In the post-revolutionary era and the age of the first Vatican Council Catholic institutional renewal was carried out with a sense of dependence upon Rome and of the necessity for theological

and liturgical conformity still greater than that of the Counter Reformation period.

The White Fathers were based quite deliberately not in France but in North Africa—in Algiers and in Carthage, outside Tunis. Lavigerie had added to his existing position that of Archbishop of Carthage and 'Primate of Africa', as well as Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara. He saw himself as the reviver of the ancient Christian Church of Africa, the Church of Cyprian of Carthage. He remained at the same time very much a French statesman for whom the French conquest of North Africa was a matter of high pride. Without it, of course, his job would not have existed. The White Fathers had their first mission to work with the Muslims in North Africa, but they soon received a second: the evangelization of the far interior of Africa, both west and east. The Holy Ghost Fathers and the SMA could take the coasts, Verona the Nile, Lavigerie would have the vast interior, which, in the age of Livingstone—and Lavigerie was something of a Livingstone fan—seemed a great deal more important. In January 1876 three White Fathers were murdered in the first party moving south across the Sahara. Two years later another party arrived on the coast of East Africa, led by Leon Livinhac. It was destined for both Buganda, north of Lake Victoria, and, to the south of it, Unyanyembe. From then on White Fathers would provide the vanguard of Catholic participation in the missionary scramble for the centre of the continent around the great lakes.

v. *The State of Missionary Complexity by 1880*

Lavigerie's White Fathers, Libermann's Holy Ghost Fathers, Comboni's Verona Fathers, and Bresillac's Missionaries of Africa were the most specialized of the new Catholic groups at work. It is noteworthy that not one among them ever ventured to South Africa. By instinct, perhaps more than by conscious decision, the missionary professional avoided settler society. But there were many other orders at work, including older groups like Capuchins and Jesuits and an increasing number of congregations of nuns. Propaganda Fide exercised some overall control more successfully in the nineteenth than in the seventeenth century. But none of the new congregations mentioned above placed its headquarters in Rome. The Catholic missionary movement remained, until after the First World War, a

network of very distinct organizations, often none too sympathetic to one another.

Yet upon the Protestant side the picture was still more complex and disorganized. If the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society retained a certain pre-eminence (at least in the literature), they were reinforced, or challenged, by more and more societies, coming from more and more nations. They overlapped and clashed. Without any central equivalent to Propaganda Fide, or, indeed, any really international society (the LMS and CMS became steadily less international as the century wore on), there was an unplanned multiplicity of organizations often overlapping on the ground, co-operative in part but also jealous of one another's influence, anxious that their own Church rather than another should prevail. British Methodists and Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians, American Congregationalists, French Calvinists, and Norwegian Lutherans were, for instance, all at work in the area between the Transkei, the Drakensburgs, and Zululand.

Away from the south they were, admittedly, less numerous, less diverse, and far less overlapping. Nevertheless, by 1880 the advance into the great interior, north of the Limpopo and away from the coast, was already well under way, well in advance of the colonial scramble, a thing missionaries before the mid-1880s were certainly not expecting. A quick survey of their presence in East and central Africa—the Livingstone area—in what was to be the last phase of pre-colonial Africa may now be helpful.

They came from two directions: through Cape Town (or Durban) in the south and Zanzibar or the Zambezi-Shire River in the east. From the south there was the LMS mission with the Ngwato of Khama at Shoshong, just north of the Limpopo. Then came the further LMS station at Inyati among the Ndebele, established by Moffat himself by permission of Mzilikazi in 1859. They had been joined by the Jesuits at Bulawayo in 1879 while François Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Mission, who had been in Basutoland since 1858, had just received permission from Lewanika of the Barotse to open a mission among them, north-west of the Zambezi. But none of these missions, north of Shoshong, had any real clientele in 1880.

On the east coast there had been Anglican and Catholic stations on Zanzibar Island since the early 1860s. The Anglican UMCA had retreated there from Magomero, south of Lake Nyasa, after the death of Bishop Mackenzie. The Catholics had advanced from a far older

presence in Mauritius. Each had begun with freed slaves. The slave market in Zanzibar was only closed in 1873. On the coast of the mainland was the CMS station at Rabai outside Mombasa where Rebmann, old and finally blind, maintained his solitary stance until 1875 when the mission was re-established on a different site as a refuge for slaves freed by the British naval patrol on the coast. Since 1862 there had also been a not very successful Methodist mission further to the north and, since 1868, a Catholic mission at Bagamoyo opposite Zanzibar. It was run by the Holy Ghost Fathers as the first large east coast freed-slave settlement. Inland the move was just beginning, cautiously, not venturing too far, as the Bagamoyo priests resettled some of their population at selected posts up-country. The UMCA was doing much the same, opening a station at Magila in 1868, Masasi in 1876, Newala 1878.

None of these were wildly ambitious moves involving major expeditions, but a number of the latter were taking place at the same time. James Stewart, who had been with Livingstone on the Zambezi and been somewhat disillusioned by the experience, had later gone to head the prestigious mission of Lovedale in South Africa. In 1874, the year after Livingstone's death, he proposed to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland a new central African mission to be named Livingstonia and to develop as 'a great centre of commerce, civilization and Christianity':⁴ the quintessence of all that Livingstone had stood for. It came into existence on the banks of Lake Nyasa the following year and was quickly joined by a comparable mission of the Church of Scotland in the highlands to the south, christened Blantyre after Livingstone's birthplace. Soon afterwards the CMS mission arrived in Buganda in response to Stanley's appeal, and, a few months later, the White Fathers too arrived not only in Buganda but also in the Lake Tanganyika area. In 1878 an LMS mission also made for Lake Tanganyika while, far to the west on the Kongo River, British and Jamaican Baptists from the Cameroon and the Livingstone Inland Mission were also beginning work that year.

The scale of the new missionary presence, much of it far inland, was now clearly considerable. Most of these ventures were far beyond the borders of any colony and undefended by colonial power. From

⁴ J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission on the Northern Province* (1977), 27.

time to time missionaries were murdered, as was Bishop Hannington on Mwanga's orders in 1885, and no one suggested that anything could be done about it. Certainly this would soon change, but there is no evidence to suggest that the missionary growth in central or West Africa before the late 1880s was in expectation of a European political take-over. It was, on the contrary, very clearly to uncolonial Africa that they had gone. If we cut off the story at this point there is adequate evidence across more than three-quarters of a century for the interaction of missionaries with an Africa outside colonial control—from Kuruman and Ibadan to Livingstonia and Buganda. It can both be considered on its own and compared with that from within the settler areas of the south.

STYLE, PRIORITIES, AND MIND

vi. *Missionary Characteristics and Life-Style*

The normative early nineteenth-century missionary was a working man. To describe him as a member of the lower middle class would be to mislead. He was an artisan, a worker with a skill, and even such clergy as went were seldom of a very different background. Even the rather grand Dr Philip was the same. He had been well educated, no doubt, but he had been to no university and had acquired his honorary doctorate by kind arrangement of Princeton. Missionaries of Philip's generation were quintessentially Free Churchmen who received and expected from government at home little but an uneasy tolerance. Abroad some indeed would soon develop an establishmentarian quality—colonial life was always a way of acquiring airs—but they were not obvious colleagues for a colonial state. As missionaries, many had had little, if any, training and were even convinced that training, education, and theology were rather pointless. What was needed was a good knowledge of the Bible, a great deal of faith, and a strong voice. The job, as at first they saw it, was one emphatically of preaching. The truth of the biblical and Christian message would be all the clearer in a non-Christian world than it was when preached in the villages and slums of Britain. Send out your cobblers, tailors, carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, and whatever. To found a Christian community, obviously, to teach trades, naturally, but the early nineteenth-century stress was neither

upon the ordering of a Church nor upon industrial mission. It was upon evangelism, and it was assumed that such people could be excellent evangelists. It is, perhaps, amazing that in a number of cases they were. Some turned for home quickly enough, others to secular employment in the field: they were, after all, leaving Britain at a time when large numbers of their class were emigrating to seek a better life in America or elsewhere. The white Grahamstown settler and the missionary were of quite the same background and, in some cases at least, of not too dissimilar a motivation. Yet it was the cobbler Carey, the gardener Moffat, and Livingstone, the employee in a cotton factory working his way through medical school, who turned into outstanding linguists and missionary statesmen.

Without question the run-of-the-mill missionary could feel sadly lost with almost no useful instruction from his home committee, little sense of teamwork in the field, huge language problems, and—most often—total lack of interest among Africans in regard to the message he was forever trying to impart. The appointment of John Philip, a 40-year-old clergyman of superior intellect, as LMS Superintendent in South Africa in 1819 was recognition from home that there was a problem and that better education and on-the-spot supervision might help resolve it. The number of recruits of comparable background grew rather slowly until the middle of the century, but missionary training, while almost absent in some cases, was taken extremely seriously by some continentals long before that. Charles Isenberg spent nine years in preparation in Basle, Berlin, and London, and, even after setting off for Africa in 1833, he still spent another eighteen months in Cairo polishing up his Arabic and Amharic.

There was also a fairly steady alteration in the balance between the lay and the clerical. The societies at home sent out recruits who were overwhelmingly lay, but many of those who stuck it out were ordained in the field within a few years. A man as little educated as James Read was hardly ordainable at home, but, once his commitment was proven, the need for more ministers quickly prevailed even in Church traditions which regarded themselves as anything but clericalist. Only in the large institutions like Lovedale and Livingstonia was there really place for a considerable number of the unordained. Otherwise, on the smaller station, the layman remained unordained only if he really was intellectually not up to it or had some clear technical job to keep him fully occupied. But as the ordained man spent much of his time gardening, building, or

printing, the need for the unordained to do such things was not so obvious. This was, again, true of medical mission, which was not seen as a distinct field until the end of the century. Until then the typical medical missionary was almost invariably ordained as well. The normative missionary was an all-rounder endeavouring to cope with bodies and souls, laying bricks, translating texts, and administering the sacraments. That was true alike of Protestant and Catholic.

In intention, nevertheless, and, to some extent, in practice, there remained a difference between 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' missionary patterns. Roman Catholic missionary societies were overwhelmingly of priests, supported by 'lay brothers' who were almost purely artisan, less numerous, and clearly subordinate. There were no genuinely lay missionaries. The high church UMCA looked rather more like a Catholic than a Protestant society; its staff was far more clerical than its Protestant predecessors and far more academic; its lay assistants were divided from the clergy more emphatically. Above all, its members were celibate. Women were essential to the Protestant approach. Men without wives would soon be in trouble and taking a native wife was seen as at least unfortunate (though the marriage of the black minister Tiyo Soga to a Scottish girl, Janet Burnside, in 1857 was quite accepted in mission circles at least, even if it caused a stir on the streets of Port Elizabeth). Men might be sent out unmarried, but once they were settled suitable women would be selected to go out to marry them, or they would find a wife on their first furlough. Single missionary men would quite often marry single missionary women on the station where both had been placed. In new and particularly risky missions, like the CMS East African venture of 1876, married men would go out leaving wife and children at home, with the idea that the latter would follow them when it was judged safe to do so. The men might be dead first. At times one gasps at the degree of apparent recklessness in the arrangements, the strain upon wives and children whether left at home or taken out. One has to remember that such arrangements were no less common at the time in the colonial service, the army, or in trade.

The single woman missionary appears quite early. Jane Waterston opened the girls' boarding school at Lovedale in 1867, Mary Slessor arrived in Calabar in 1876, but single women had been going out for many years before that. The CMS was averse to sending them out before the 1880s and it is only in the last twenty years of the century

that they become very numerous—the huge total increase in missionary numbers after 1880 is made up to a quite considerable extent of unmarried women. Nevertheless, the unmarried woman was a notable part of the Victorian missionary team from a far earlier date, and in few other ways might European women of the middle and lower classes find so much freedom to work and to exercise responsibility, despite the undoubted male dominance of the missionary world as a whole. But the central model for Protestant mission was certainly that of the missionary couple in which husband and wife were seen as fellow workers. In the pleasant atmosphere of Kuruman and the home of Mary and Robert Moffat it worked well enough. They lived there fifty years and brought up a large and healthy family. Further north it was more often disastrous, and the death-rate was particularly high among children and pregnant wives. Anna Hinderer may well have survived—if at times only just—for seventeen years at Ibadan in the 1850s and 1860s precisely because she was childless. The strain on missionary wives in frequent childbirth in the most awkward of circumstances is clear enough. Emily Moffat wrote advisedly in 1860, 'I am almost an advocate, in such raw missions as this, so remote from help in times of need, for a bachelor commencement'.⁵ Only a year later Roger Price of the ill-fated Makololo mission wrote to Emily's husband,

On the 7th (March) I found little Henry Helmore lying dead amongst the others on the bed, and his father and mother, lying on the ground like logs of wood, scarcely took any notice at all of it, his mother none whatever, though passionately fond of him. On the 9th my own little babe died in its mother's arms as she sat by my bedside, where I laid in a wet sheet . . . on the afternoon of the 11th, dear little Selma Helmore died . . . Next morning Mrs Helmore followed.⁶

Thirty years later the CMS had actually adopted Emily Moffat's advice and was refusing to send 'young married women' to Uganda while agreeing to send such unmarried as were 'willing to forgo any intention of marriage for some years'.⁷ Yet being married could also be a help. The Baptist Grenfell, exploring the upper reaches of the Congo River in the 1880s, took his black Jamaican wife and child

⁵ J. P. R. Wallis (ed.), *The Matabeleland Mission: A Selection from the Correspondence of John and Emily Moffat, David Livingstone and Others 1858-1878* (1945), p. xvi.

⁶ *Ibid.* 143-4.

⁷ E. Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society* (1896), iii. 736.

along with him to demonstrate his pacific intentions. The particularly disastrous Makololo experience was a little unusual for the southern hemisphere. On the west coast it had for long been nearer the norm. The picture of the mission house of the American Mendi Mission, the frontispiece of an 1851 publication, has beneath it the words: 'This house was built by Wm Reynold, the founder of Mendi mission: in it I lived two years, was sick and supposed to be dead. In it Misses Harnden and Allen, Mrs Tefft and Arnold, and Messrs Garnick and Carter died.'⁸ All within a couple of years. That lists a high proportion of women. In the earlier period, women were most numerous at the more Protestant and American end of the missionary spectrum, but Mother Anne-Marie Javouhey and her French Catholic nuns were already at work on the west coast in the 1820s and she survived, though again only just. Undoubtedly, the regular use of quinine from the 1850s began to make quite a difference. If Anna Hinderer did survive in Ibadan for seventeen years, her husband lasted still longer. Henry Townsend went out to Sierra Leone in 1836, moved to Abeokuta in the 1840s, and returned to England in 1876. Alfred Saker left England in 1843 and returned from Cameroon in 1876. The American Presbyterian Robert Nassau went out to a particularly unhealthy bit of the coast, the estuary of the Gabon, in 1861. With a few furloughs he was still at work in Africa in 1906. But long before him Mgr. Bessieux, the Catholic pioneer in the same area, had first gone out in 1843 as a member of Mgr. Barron's otherwise disastrous expedition. The one priest survivor, he died in Libreville in 1876, still active to the end. Thus while there was a very real difference in health and life expectation between the south and the west, so that, for long, the majority of missionaries in the west died within the first two years while most in the south not only had no health problems but had their life expectancy actually improved, yet from the 1840s there was an increasing number of survivors in the west, and some of them, adequately acclimatized, survived for a very long time. To that small but powerful group—T. B. Freeman in the Gold Coast, Townsend and the Hinderers in Nigeria, Saker in Cameroon, Bessieux in Gabon, among others—the Church of the second half of the century would owe a great deal of its shape.

Missionaries not only turned back or died. Quite a few turned to

⁸ George Thompson, *Thompson in Africa* (New York, 1852).

other occupations, some none too creditable. In early West African days, one or two became slave-traders. Stokes, a CMS man in East Africa, took a black wife and turned gun-runner and general trader. Many more, in South and central Africa, quietly turned into settlers, large landed proprietors, or colonial officials. Livingstone left the employ of the LMS and became a British consul instead. He indeed did not give up his missionary interest, but the change of employment was not seen as abnormal. His brother-in-law, John Moffat, did the same, but later changed back once more to the mission. For many missionaries who failed to master the language and to sympathize with Africans, the decision to leave missionary employment was clearly appropriate. For others, it went with sexual lapses, drink, or a complete inability to get on with missionary colleagues. The idea of returning to Europe was seldom an attractive one. Some, even as missionaries, had become partially integrated within the local settler community, and it was seen as natural to move across entirely. All this immensely increased, for Africans, the difficulty of discerning any significant difference between the missionary and colonial government or white settler.

A frequently recurring Protestant problem was the interrelationship of missionaries among themselves. They had not been trained for community or to share a common work; they tended to be individualistic and obstinate by temperament; they often quarrelled fearfully. The Catholics, on the other hand, were members of religious orders who had been through tough novitiates before profession and were expected to live and relate to one another much the same in Africa as in Europe. When faced with strange circumstances this did not always succeed in avoiding friction and it often inhibited initiative, but it did provide far more of a framework both for harmony and for survival than most Protestants (apart from the Moravians) were offered. Where Catholic mortality was high it was often among those who insisted on continuing to practise forms of bodily asceticism, including heavy fasting, designed for Europe. Catholics, because they were celibate and bound by the regulations of a religious order, did not fuse with other local white groups in the way the Protestants tended to do. Even in dress you could distinguish them from the trader. And if they abandoned the mission they went home. Before the mid-twentieth century you very rarely find former Catholic missionaries who have settled in Africa. Finally, the place of women was decidedly different. Catholic women

missionaries were all nuns, even more tightly disciplined than the priests, and they were very few until near the end of the century. Widespread female participation was one of the novelties of the Protestant missionary movement. It was a dimension almost entirely absent on the Catholic side.

In the second half of the century, class background and education moved up quite considerably. Doubtless the upper-class English Jesuits in Matabeleland in the 1880s were socially exceptional: Alfred Weld had been Director of the Stonyhurst Observatory and English Provincial and had done diplomatic work for the Vatican in regard to India and Gibraltar before becoming Superintendent of the Zambezi Mission; Augustus Law, grandson of Lord Ellenborough, had been a naval officer; Henry Schomberg Ker, second son of the sixth Marquis of Lothian, had been chaplain to Lord Ripon while Viceroy of India. Nowhere else did you find people of such exalted experience entering the African mission, but their calling had not been to Africa but to become Jesuits. They went to Africa in obedience. Their class, education, and relatively advanced age did not, however, improve their missionary skills. They appear as a devout, self-sacrificing, but rather rigid group, poor on language-learning.

Newton Adams, a well-qualified doctor and educationalist from New York sponsored by the American Board of Mission, had already arrived in South Africa in 1835, six years before Livingstone. He may well have pointed the way towards the mission of the future better than any of his contemporaries. Adams and Livingstone were followed from the 1860s by increasing numbers of graduates. We have seen the English UMCA group of university men, led by Bishop Mackenzie, going up the Zambezi in 1861 and then withdrawing to Zanzibar. Still more influential were Scottish graduates like James Stewart, Robert Laws, Alexander Hetherwick, and William Elmslie. Like Livingstone, Adams, and Henry Callaway, they all had degrees in medicine, though some had theological degrees as well, but other disciplines could also be attracted. Mackay was an engineer of distinction, Colenso a mathematician. Emily Moffat's complaint in 1860 'Home folk think anyone will do for Africa, however ignorant'⁹ was ceasing to be true.

The change was clearest of all with the UMCA, an entire society of graduates. On the whole, the quality of mind they displayed and a

more discriminating approach to tricky issues justified this initiative, though a certain Anglo-Catholic rigidity produced its own disadvantages. To opt for celibacy might be wise, but to insist—even into the twentieth century—that a doctor and nurse who decided to marry must leave the mission, even when they were practically irreplaceable, was surely not. But in no other group was there a larger number of good linguists.

William Percival Johnson, who worked in and around Lake Nyasa from 1876 to 1928, is, perhaps, an almost unfairly fine example, but he was not untypical. He represents the quality that the missionary movement was able to field at the point it had reached well before the colonial scramble, even if his exceptional longevity (despite living almost at native level) saw him through to a very different era. He had studied Sanskrit at Oxford before volunteering, and, indeed, tutors thought it crazy that this exceptional young orientalist should decide to go to Africa. As he travelled up country with his bishop from Zanzibar in 1876, he was reading *Tivo Gentlemen of Verona*. Certainly he and his bishop, Edward Steere, were gentlemen, as the missionaries of an earlier age, so cruelly derided by Sydney Smith, were not. Like some of their predecessors they were also scholars. Steere was largely responsible for the Swahili Bible, Johnson for the Chinyanja Bible.

Livingstone and Colenso remain the intellectual princes of the nineteenth-century missionary movement. Livingstone was the most remarkable of Victorian Free Churchmen, Colenso the most remarkable of Victorian Anglican bishops. But they were both rogue elephants, too independent in mind for the movement to contain them. Men like Adams, Stewart, Laws, Johnson, were less intellectually flamboyant and individualist, but they and many others were people of considerable education, intelligence, and imaginative judgement. It is important that the sheer human calibre of the missionary leadership be adequately recognized. It was not principally a group of cranks and zealots, even if it included both, but of men of exceptional and wide-ranging ability though, admittedly, even in the ablest a slightly cranky dimension is often discernible and in fact may add to the attraction.

Catholic missionaries also changed in this half-century, if somewhat differently. Classwise, the English Zambezi Jesuits were, of course, quite untypical. While Protestant missionaries had been recruited principally from the urban population and then from

⁹ Wallis, *The Matabeleland Mission*, 118.

academia (though there were groups from a largely rural background such as the Württemberg missionaries of the Basle mission), Catholics came predominantly from the countryside, the farming families of the more devout areas of Europe. Their background was always much the same as that of the home clergy and many in fact began as French diocesan priests or—at least—students in a French or Italian diocesan seminary before transferring to a missionary society. What changed in the course of the nineteenth century was the degree of professionalism produced by the new missionary societies wholly devoted to Africa. It was also affected by imitation of the Protestant example—more conscious attempts to ‘civilize’ here, more insistence on language proficiency and the use of texts in translation there. That is not to deny that some Catholic missionaries of the earlier dispensation were already remarkably insistent upon the serious study of language as a necessary element in cultural adaptation. De Jacobis is one outstanding example from the first half of the century. No less remarkable was his contemporary Dr Ignaz Knoblecher, the Slovene Vicar-Apostolic on the Upper Nile from 1848 to his death in 1858. He was second to none of any age in his learning of languages and study of local custom, but several of his colleagues, men like the German Kirchner and the Italian Beltrame, a pioneer in Dinka studies, were of similar quality. It was one of the most interesting of missionary groups, its mix in national background being characteristic of the Austrian Empire from which it mostly came. Unfortunately the Sudanese climate had claimed by 1866 no fewer than forty-six missionary casualties, and the mission was closed with no local surviving Church of any sort. Nevertheless, the figure of Knoblecher, ‘Abuna Suleiman’ as he was known up and down the Nile, in his white turban, reddish-brown beard, and flowing purple robe, author of important manuscripts on the language and customs of the Bari and the Dinka, remains one of the most charming figures in nineteenth-century missionary history.

Knoblecher also represents quite recognizably the normative Catholic approach at its best as opposed to the normative Protestant: far less concern with ‘civilizing’, far closer cultural identification. Dressed as he was, he did not look European and clearly did not want to be taken for a European. In general the cassock and its variants distinguished the Catholic missionary from white trader or settler while the trousers of the Protestant were a mark of cultural identity. But the Sudan mission was affected less

happily by clinging to ascetic practices, especially fasting, in circumstances in which the missionaries were already debilitated, just as had been the case with the Capuchins of the seventeenth century. Yet this too conveyed an intelligible religious message. The Catholic fathers looked and behaved altogether more recognizably to native eyes as spiritual figures, other-worldly gurus, and much less like an officious, moralizing wing of European power. If their language knowledge was often good, they lacked printing-presses, to which Protestants gave a high priority. It was Protestants, not Catholics, who effectively created a vernacular literature. In 1873 Bishop Steere remarked that the French Holy Ghost Fathers at Bagamoyo ‘are beginning to use our words and to study our translations’. He had come upon Frère Marcellin sitting under a bush and ‘working away at our St Matthew’ while Père Étienne was ‘most glad of a copy of our hymns’.¹⁰ More than anything else it was the instruction of Lavigerie and the practice of the early White Fathers from the 1870s which put a considerable segment of the Catholic missionary force in the forefront of the struggle to understand both language and custom. It is noteworthy that when Pilkington, best of the early CMS linguists in Uganda, arrived in 1890 and began studying the language, he found the French, White Father, Luganda grammar far better than the English.

More use of quinine, the easier climate of many inland areas, and a general growth in geographical knowledge and experience were all factors enabling missionaries to live longer and be more effective by the 1870s. Basic problems of inland travel were still far from overcome, but they started fitter. In the past many had been so debilitated by the sea voyage that they were in no condition to withstand the first attacks of fever. Quicker voyages and, for the east coast, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made a considerable difference. After that the difficulties remained almost unchanged. In South Africa there was no problem. The mission spread on the back of the horse and the ox wagon. The mid-nineteenth-century advance would have been a very different thing without their help, as would the Boer advance to the Transvaal. The ox cart could just about reach the Zambezi before the animals expired from the bite of the tsetse fly. North of that you walked, sat in a ‘machila’ or ‘palanquin’ carried by from four to ten Africans, or rode a donkey or

¹⁰ R. M. Heanley, *A Memoir of Bishop Steere* (1888), 118.

horse. Everything was tried. Horses were used a certain amount even in Nigeria, and Coillard brought a horse from South Africa as far as Barotseland and rode it for years before it died—'that good old servant', he lamented in 1891, 'without whom I never went any excursion',¹¹ and Bishop Knight-Bruce regularly rode a salted horse in Rhodesia in 1892. But horses did not flourish in most parts of central Africa and donkeys were in commoner use. George Grenfell rode on an ox in the Congo. Many missionaries disliked being carried. Livingstone almost always walked. Occasionally he rode a donkey. Only in his very last days do we read in his Journal, 'carried in the Kitanda'.¹² Women were regularly carried longer distances, but at times carriers could not be found and even they had to walk a few hundred miles. Walking was exhausting, even more so if—like Bishop Mackenzie—you marched along with a crozier in one hand, a double-barrelled gun in the other, and a bag of seeds on your back.¹³ Lavigerie blamed the superior of a missionary who had died worn out because he had allowed him to walk and not insisted on his riding a donkey or being carried.¹⁴ It is surprising that they did not use donkeys more than they seem to have done. Mackay in 1877 was given a horse by the Sultan of Zanzibar. It soon died, but later he was given a donkey by the Sultan of Sadami and it kept going all the way to Buganda: 'It saved me many a mile on foot'.¹⁵ In 1890 Bishop Tucker took two donkeys on his first journey to Buganda, but in 1892 on his second he took seventy. Protestant missionaries tended to carry far more equipment than Catholics in the big expeditions—boats, printing-presses, and the rest—requiring many hundreds or even thousands of porters, each with a load of 70 pounds. If they died or defected, so much the worse for your luggage. Again and again, equipment had to be discarded. In December 1877 Mackay, following CMS board instructions, set off from the coast for Lake Victoria with six large carts and eighty oxen to draw them. The oxen soon began to die and by February he had had to abandon the lot.

The idea of water transport was naturally appealing. Though Mgr. Knoblecher had a boat, the *Stella Matutina*, on the Nile in 1851, this was once more mostly a Protestant stratagem, encouraged by

¹¹ 14 Apr. 1891, François Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa* (1897), 418-19.

¹² R. Coupland, *Livingstone's Last Journey* (1945), 243.

¹³ Owen Chadwick, *Mackenzie's Grave* (1959), 44.

¹⁴ Cardinal Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires* (Namur, 1950), 128-9.

¹⁵ *The Story of Mackay of Uganda*, by his sister (1892), 59.

Livingstone and the 'commerce' school. Supporters at home much liked the idea of launching boats on the great lakes and rivers of Africa. In due course it made a difference on the River Congo and Lake Nyasa. Livingstonia's *Ilala* (from 1875), the UMCA's *Charles Janson* (1888), and the BMS *Plymouth* on the Congo (from 1881) were certainly of real use. Elsewhere the distances required for portage were just too much and there were plenty of large canoes on Lake Victoria, for instance. Crossing a lake was the least of missionary problems. Getting there remained a formidable one: Inevitably, in consequence of all this, the missionary in the interior tended to be sedentary. Surviving the inland journey was already a feat. Establishing a mission station with its house and church, reliable water supply, and gardens was a second. The station itself then required continuous servicing while the survival of the missionaries depended above all upon its amenities. Where health and life were always so much at risk, the shape of the mission was controlled excessively by the requirement of missionary survival. In theory they had come to serve others. In practice it had to be that life revolved largely around their own needs. As one bright young missionary, fresh from Cambridge, described it:

The contrast will have struck you already. The people, to whom we have come to preach, lie on the ground or in a reed or grass hut, eat rice and a bit of dried fish (two cupfuls of rice and a handful of dried fish is a day's ration), carry a load under a burning sun for ten or twelve miles which I should be sorry to carry a mile in England, walk barefoot on the scorching ground, while we live in grand houses or tents (palaces to these people), sleep on beds as comfortable as any at home, eat chickens (carried in a box alive), preserved meat, green peas (preserved), tea, cocoa, biscuits, bread, butter, jam. Necessary for health perhaps . . .¹⁶

That was the comment of a newly-arrived in a particularly large and well-supplied expedition in 1890. Unfair for an earlier age, it represents all the same the way things were going.

At times it must have seemed to almost every missionary that the one thing there was no time or place for was formal missionary work. Travelling, obtaining supplies, arranging the dispatch of mail, building, gardening, digging irrigation canals, ensuring your water supply or your daily meal were all such engrossing and tiring occupations, let alone having babies, coping with illnesses, and

¹⁶ 20 Apr. 1890, C. Harford-Battersby, *Pilkington of Uganda* (1898), 68-9.

learning a language. Yet all this was subsidiary to the great work they had come to do: preaching, the making of converts, the establishment of a Christian Church.

vii. *Missionary Teaching*

The early nineteenth-century Protestant missionary saw himself above all as a preacher and teacher of the biblical message of salvation. He thought rather little of what might follow conversion. He was seldom an ecclesiologist but often an eschatologist. He was anxious to preach to people as quickly and as frequently as possible, even when his grasp of any native language was—to say the least—tenuous. He would do it through an interpreter; whether the interpreter really understood the message and its more unexpected ideas, whether he had vernacular terms in which he could express them intelligibly, was not at once seen as rather unlikely. Or, if it was, this was not to be allowed to stand in the way of the great commandment, Go ye and teach all nations. Yet things were not that much easier when a language had, more or less, been learnt. Moffat wrote in April 1827, 'One afternoon I commenced conversing with about twelve women, who happened to collect before my wagon. I dwelt particularly on the coming of Christ, the raising of the dead and the end of the world. They really seemed in some degree alarmed.'¹⁷ Three years later another LMS missionary, John Baillie, wrote in his journal at Lithako

We began to catechise them . . . I enquired (of an old man) what reason he had to think that he would go to heaven on dying, since he had lived always sinning against God. He replied that he had never committed any sin, and therefore he must go to Morimo, i.e. God . . . I then endeavoured to show him his lost and undone condition by nature and practice, and the impossibility of his ever going to heaven unless he should be converted from his present condition, but this seemed quite uninteresting to him.¹⁸

Franz Morland, a Catholic missionary at Gondokoro in the Sudan, commented on the same lack of interest in his diary in 1859: 'One teaches in school, one preaches in Church, the doors are always left open, the people who stand around with nothing to do are invited

¹⁷ *Apprenticeship at Kuruman: Being the Journals and Letters of Robert and Mary Moffat 1820–1828*, ed. I. Schapera (1951), 265.

¹⁸ G. Setiloane, *The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana* (Rotterdam, 1976), 115.

in, but our doctrine, God's commandments, the creation, redemption, salvation, the immortality of the soul do not interest them.'¹⁹

Everywhere missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, attempted this direct approach, just as many a Franciscan had done in earlier centuries. Hinderer would walk round Ibadan or tour the neighbouring villages preaching in the open, week after week. It was standard form. 'With such interpreters and aids as we could obtain, we ceased not to lift up our voices to proclaim the Gospel . . . we itinerated by turn every Sabbath to the neighbouring villages; and very frequently after four and five miles walk could not get an individual to listen to the message of divine mercy.'²⁰ It cannot but be surprising to us that it was surprising to them. Why any African should be interested by such extraordinary assertions, uttered in broken and barely comprehensible language by a stranger, it would be difficult to say. It is clear that the doctrine immediately offered was at this period normally both a very Christ-centred and an individualistic one: the saviour, human sin, heaven and hell. Many a Protestant, Moffat included, made things even stranger by stress upon the resurrection of the dead, a stress which may well explain the millennial message of the Xhosa prophet Nxele in the 1820s. Consider this conversation:

'What!' he exclaimed with astonishment. 'What are these words about? the dead, the dead arise!' 'Yes', was my reply, 'all the dead shall arise'. 'Will my father arise?' 'Yes', I answered, 'your father will arise'. 'Will all the slain in battle arise?' 'Yes' . . . 'Hark . . . did ever your ears hear such strange and unheard of news?'²¹

This might well sound like the Xhosa king Ngqika, responding sceptically to the predictions of Nxele; it is in fact Makaba, Chief of the Bamangkhetsi, responding to Moffat on his first visit.

The Zulu were no less unpersuaded by millennialist teaching. Colenso on his first visit to them in 1854 was assured that the profession of Christianity had been much hindered by 'persons saying that the world will be burnt up—perhaps very soon'.²² The millennialist assertions of many an early nineteenth-century Protestant missionary or even the ceaseless stress upon an afterlife seemed no less bizarre to his black hearers than they did to plenty of

¹⁹ Francesco Morland, *Missione in Africa centrale: Diario 1855–1863* (Bologna, 1973), 193.

²⁰ R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (1842), 296.

²¹ *Ibid.* 404. ²² John Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal* (1855), 100–1.

people in Europe at the same time.²³ But if they got beyond their healthy scepticism and began to believe, the hermeneutical gap between white preacher and black hearer could still not be closed. The missionary, consciously or not, was distanced from the biblical events and images he dwelt upon in a way that his converts, hearing of these things for the first time, could hardly be. If angels frequently appeared in the gospel narrative which the missionary had thoughtfully translated into their language, then they could be expected to go on appearing in contemporary Africa, and so forth. People either did not believe the missionaries or they did. Either way the latter might well feel that their message had not got through. For most missionaries there was in reality a great gap between the biblical dispensation and the ecclesiastical dispensation of the Victorian Church. It was assumed but not explained. For their hearers it was only discovered when they later challenged the latter dispensation on grounds of their understanding of the former and found themselves in trouble.

The effective theology of missionaries varied a great deal, Evangelicals from Catholics, millennialists from non-millennialists, fundamentalists from a handful of relative liberals. The same society might include people with sharply divergent views as—by the late nineteenth century—was increasingly the case in the home Church, though Colenso proved too liberal in biblical interpretation to be acceptable to his colleagues. Missionaries almost always represented the more conservative end of current orthodoxy at home, but in the nineteenth century Protestant orthodoxy at least was changing perceptibly. Some were preoccupied with the devil; with others Satan hardly got a mention. Hell remained a much-stressed Catholic doctrine long after it was slipping out of Protestant sermons. Yet if missionaries grew less fundamentalist in their thoughts, they seldom admitted this too openly, and it almost certainly had little effect on what African Christians actually understood. The Bible message was accepted in its most literal form.

There appears, nevertheless, to have been a significant shift from initial concentration upon sin, salvation, and eschatology to one focused more upon God and creation, upon a linkage even with African traditional belief. For Catholics and High-Churchmen, this

²³ H. Fast, "In One Ear and Out at the Other": African Response to the Wesleyan Message in Xhosaland 1825–1835, *JRA* 23 (1993), 164–6.

came more naturally than for Evangelicals, but it was a matter of pedagogy as much as of theology. Bishop Mackenzie, in 1861, never preached at all to the unbeliever. He did not know enough of the language to dare to do so, and he did not trust the skills of his interpreters. The post-Tractarian university mind realized more easily the absurdity of the sort of brash preaching of the Christian mysteries in an alien language which an earlier generation had thought itself bound to engage in. John Colenso, admittedly a theological liberal, was already in 1865 criticizing missionaries for their stress upon salvation rather than the larger revelation of God. Callaway, writing in 1870, records the account a very old Xhosa man named Ulangeni gave of Van der Kemp's teaching: 'He made enquiries amongst us, asking "What do you say about the creation of all things?" We replied, "We call him who made all things Utikxo." And he enquired, "Where is he?" We replied, "In heaven." Uyegana said, "Very well, I bring you that very one (that is, all that relates to or concerns him) to you of this country.'²⁴ Maybe that memory is coloured by subsequent Christian teaching, but it suggests that even in the first years of the century a highly intelligent, if idiosyncratic, Evangelical could start with creation and God, not salvation and Christ, and could use African beliefs as a bridge. 'Tell them', said Colenso in 1854, 'that their own names are excellent names for God; and we shall . . . come to tell them more about Him.'²⁵ Lavigerie would forbid his White Fathers even to mention anything derived from revelation and relating to Christ in the first two years of instruction, which were to be confined to 'fundamental truths of the natural order'.²⁶ It would be a command hard to keep, but it certainly pointed in a sane direction. When linked with the acceptance of a traditional African name to denote God (general, though not universal, among missionaries) such an approach could enable missionaries to begin to talk intelligibly, moving on from a common ground of belief, instead of flinging out at the start an extraordinary mix of salvific and eschatological doctrines.

Direct evangelism would not disappear, indeed many an African catechist or prophet would excel at it. They would, of course, ground it much better than could the newly arrived missionary within a context of local meaning. Sometimes, even with the

²⁴ Henry Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu* (1870), 67–8.

²⁵ Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, 134.

²⁶ Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, 109.

missionary, it seemed to work. Perhaps sometimes with Hinderer on a street corner in urban Ibadan. W. P. Johnson, far from a formal Evangelical, continued to favour it in the 1880s as part of his exceptionally eccentric model. He remained 'very free in speaking of our message wherever I went'. Colleagues had made clear to him 'what questions these miscellaneous preachings raised', but he still held that 'the original proclamation of the Gospel is a great work' and that 'it seems more honest and open on the part of the missionary to say at once what he has come for'.²⁷ He was not looking for conversions. He simply did not want to deceive people into thinking him anything other than what he was.

For the most part, however, early conversions came in other ways—through employment, protection, or just a desire to read. Most early converts were members of a missionary's household or otherwise within his circle and protection. His influence upon them was cumulative. The encouragement to be present at prayers, to attend his teaching on a daily or weekly basis, and to see things his way was the natural spiritual and intellectual concomitant of living within the community of a mission station. It was backed up by a host of subsidiary persuaders. Livingstone wrote home in 1856 about his porters on his transcontinental journey: 'The sight of ships and commerce has such a good effect on their minds, for when they see such examples of our superiority they readily admit that the Bible has something in it'.²⁸ 'Where have the white people got all this from, and why are they now superior to the black in so many things?', asked a Norwegian missionary of Zulus a few years later. 'Is it not the word of God which they have received which has worked these wonders among them?'²⁹ Again and again the power of Britain was appealed to as demonstration of the truth of the Bible. Victoria herself had done nothing less when she wrote to the chiefs of Abeokuta that the greatness of England depended upon the knowledge of Christ.³⁰ For the Victorian missionary this was no insincere appeal, simplistic as it must seem. The Victorian Protestant was intensely sure that Britain was the high heaven of human achievement and that the explanation lay in her Protestant faith.

²⁷ W. P. Johnson, *My African Reminiscences 1875–1895* (1924), 172.

²⁸ David Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence 1841–1856*, ed. I. Schapera (1961), 310.

²⁹ J. Simensen, 'Religious Change as Transaction: The Norwegian Mission to Zululand, South Africa 1850–1906', *JRA* 16 (1986), 85.

³⁰ Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society*, ii, 105.

How little he knew about Victorian Britain! But his appeal was also to smaller, more immediately impressive things: the concertina, the gramophone, but especially the magic lantern, a favourite missionary possession. Livingstone carried one with him though when using it he was careful to make clear that there was nothing supernatural about its effects: it was the natural, scientific power of the white man which, he believed, pointed to the truth of Christianity, not anything supernatural, essentially supernatural as the core of his message undoubtedly was. His explanations meant little to his hearers: the magic lantern was clearly magical. But such things appealed too because they simply made life more enjoyable; they helped make it pleasant to share the missionary's company. They were a way to create initial interest, even a bit of excitement.

viii. *The Uses of Medicine*

Far more important in a missionary's repertoire, however, was his medical skill. Livingstone had early wished to be 'a medical missionary'.³¹ At Koboleng he certainly spent much of his time working as a doctor, removing tumours and teeth, treating eyes, and advising on childlessness. 'Every morning numbers of patients crowded round our house.'³² But in this he was in no way exceptional. He doubtless had a wider range of medical skills than his gardener father-in-law, Moffat, but he may not have spent so much more of his time on medical work. What is striking is how little he actually refers to it in his writings. Doctoring was nothing new for a missionary. The Jesuits in Ethiopia in the seventeenth century, for instance, had done quite the same. As Jeronimo Lobo wrote in his cool, detached way, 'The common country-folk of the land came to hold me in high repute as a doctor, thinking that was my profession and coming to ask for remedies, which I distributed liberally and authoritatively according to the instructions in a handbook I had.'³³ The only Jesuit who survived in Ethiopia after the débâcle of the 1630s was a German, Francis Storer, disguised as an Armenian doctor. Catholics continued this tradition in the nineteenth century. We hear of the first SMA fathers at Ouidah distributing medicines, treating sores, even performing minor operations. They were not doctors.

³¹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, 5.

³² *Ibid.* 114.

³³ J. Lobo, *Itinerario*, ed. M. G. da Costa and Donald Lockhart (1984), 262–3.

Protestants took over exactly the same approach. They may have been prepared with a little more medical training, but this was not seen as an activity distinct from that of the regular missionary. Schireuder, the Norwegian pioneer in Zululand, was allowed to settle there because of his successful treatment of King Mpande. The Norwegian mission had no trained doctor before 1874, but already in 1864 it was reported that 'They daily come to ask for medicines . . . often the entire morning is consumed by attendance to these people.' Here too a whole range of problems was being treated, from toothache to vaccination against smallpox, but sometimes all that missionaries could hand out were Eno's Fruit Salts or a spoonful of castor oil all round.³⁴

The impression given by such remarks, often provided slightly on the side, is that the amount of medical work performed by the average nineteenth-century missionary was very much more considerable than we tend to imagine, but it was almost always unplanned and had no close connection with conversion. It was a response to human need, often to emergencies, and was pressed on missionaries by Africa rather than deliberately pursued. To some it may have seemed almost a waste of time, delaying other more important occupations almost indefinitely. Medical knowledge was provided for the early missionaries more to safeguard their own health than to care at all systematically for others; even some of the first doctors were sent with this purpose still very much in mind. Cardinal Lavigerie may have been the first person to want to make of it a central element within an African missionary strategy although, paradoxically, in reality it came to be very much less central to White Father work than to that of many other groups. Africans expected religion and health to go together; indeed, 'religion' had little point to it apart from health. The missionary mix of the two fitted Africa precisely because it did not professionalize medicine too far away from the religious area. Missionaries may not have seen their approach as a holistic one, and for some it may have been little more than a matter of sharing the medicine they had brought for themselves with others when asked to do so. Even with the Scottish missions like Livingstonia and Blantyre, where a remarkable number of the leading missionaries were trained doctors, they were for long

³⁴ T. Jorgensen, 'Contact and Conflict', Ph.D. thesis (Oslo, 1989), 182-3; for Eno's Fruit Salts and the castor oil, see Duff Macdonald, *Africana* (1882), 2, 207-8.

anxious not to separate their medical work from the rest of their ministry. This approach must at least have looked holistic in the receiver's eyes. The missionary understood his medicines as working on purely 'scientific' grounds, the recipients understood them rather differently: for them the personal goodness of the missionary and his religious authority might have a lot more to do with it. There was a variety of missionary attitudes. On the Protestant side the CMS appeared to be least interested in medical work, the Scots the most. For Catholics it may have been more consciously conversion-orientated. 'Father Lutz is the doctor of the whole town,' lamented the CMS Dobinson from Onitsha in 1890. 'From 7-9 daily he receives sick folk and of course everyone goes whoever they may be.'³⁵

The medical missionary was almost certainly more of a charismatic figure, even occasionally a miracle worker, than he imagined, especially when his medical expertise was less than his holiness. Livingstone's reputation among Africans was as a magician of exceptional power, and other missionaries who really made an impact could be seen as his younger brothers. An old Tanzanian priest, Canon Msigala, recalled in the 1950s an incident when he was very young involving one of the early UMCA priests, Canon Porter.

One day I was walking with him on parochial work when he saw a child, called Karowanga, a chronic invalid. He washed his sores, but had no bandage, so he said, 'Haven't we a purificator in church? Let us bind up this child'. By chance we had some suitable ones and he split these and bound the wounds of the child with them with medicine. For a time he prayed without uncovering them. When he uncovered them he was quite healed and his arm which had been bent was quite straight.³⁶

That was an exceptional experience, but it may still express the way in which Africans frequently understood the effectiveness of missionary medicine.

Later on two things happened. The first was the development of a distinct 'medical mission' with its own rationale, staffed by doctors and nurses who would run hospitals and clinics, but not participate in missionary work of other kinds. It was only in the 1890s that this development got under way anywhere, and much later in many

³⁵ F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914* (1972), 77-8.

³⁶ K. Msigala, 'Reminiscences Started in July 1955', trans. from Swahili by C. Blood, quoted in T. Ranger, 'Godly Medicine: The Ambiguities of Medical Mission in South-East Tanzania 1900-1945', *Social Science and Medicine*, 15B (1981), 261-77.

places. Albert Cook, arriving in Uganda in 1896, is one of the first of the new breed. It involved a rationale which in some ways stressed the importance of medicine within missionary strategy far more than had been usual in the nineteenth century, but it also secularized it. The second development, perhaps in some reaction to the first, was the rise of independent Churches far more committed to Christian healing of a spiritual kind. While this can well be seen as the emergence within Christianity of more traditional African attitudes to healing and as a critique of the secularity of the twentieth-century medical missionary approach, it may also be seen as in deep continuity with the central perceived thrust of nineteenth-century medical mission.

ix. Language and Translation

While doctoring could be for many a time-consuming side occupation, the mastering of a new language and Scripture translation were—for the few capable of it—a missionary's central responsibility. Upon them preaching and teaching must be entirely dependent together with the whole subsequent life of the Church. They were certainly no less time-consuming. John Moffat remembered his father as spending 'most of his time' in his study, the rest of it doctoring the sick and being a general handyman.³⁷ Colenso, replying angrily to a suggestion by Bishop Gray that he had 'considerable gifts' for the study of language and in consequence it came easily to him, wrote testily,

I have no special gift for languages, but what is shared by most educated men of fair ability. What I have done, I have done by hard work—by sitting with my natives day after day, from early morn to sunset, till they, as well as myself, were fairly exhausted—conversing with them as well as I could and listening to them conversing—writing down what I could of their talk from their own lips, and, when they were gone, still turning round again to my desk to copy out the results of the day.³⁸

Out of that work had come two grammars, a dictionary, four reading-books in Zulu, as well as Old and New Testament translations. Two years earlier Samuel Crowther wrote to Henry

³⁷ Cecil Northcott, *Robert Moffat* (1961), 131.

³⁸ J. Colenso, *Remarks upon the Recent Proceedings and Charge of Robert, Lord Bishop of Capetown* (1864), 44-5.

Venn, in December 1862, informing him of the tragic loss of his papers when his house was burnt down in Lagos:

I had always made it a rule that in case of a fire breaking out, not to hesitate but to snatch out the manuscripts of my translations the first thing, for security, and then I may try to save anything else if possible; but on this occasion I was not at home to put my resolution to practice. . . . Thus the manuscripts 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. The loss of those is greater to me than anything else, in as much as 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, with which I had expected to enrich and enlarge my Yoruba vocabulary this year. Now all are gone like a dream.³⁹

Crowther was himself a Yoruba. How much harder for any foreigner was the work of creating the first grammar, the first dictionary, the first collection of sayings. Pilkington, a Cambridge first in classics and the ablest of the CMS linguists in Uganda, wrote home that 'in most cases' it was 'worse than useless' to send a man without special training in language into a place where the language was not already mastered, yet that was what the societies had been doing from the start. 'I assure you,' he wrote, 'the majority of the men whom I've seen in the field closely, wouldn't learn a new language without help in twenty years.'⁴⁰ Moffat was very unusual among the major translators in knowing neither Greek nor Hebrew, but many—including Pilkington himself—translated large parts of the Old Testament without knowing Hebrew. Pilkington wrote much of the Luganda Bible in Ireland on leave. He was a confident man! Probably the Basle Germans were the ablest group of missionary linguists. The vast majority of missionaries of course knew no ancient language and most British missionaries knew none other than English. Pilkington rightly distinguished between the pioneer learning of a language and that by those able to use the grammars and dictionaries already produced by others. The Baptist Missionary Society in the Congo

³⁹ J. Ajayi, *Christian Mission in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Élite* (1969), 128.

⁴⁰ Harford-Battersby, *Pilkington of Uganda*, 195-6.

put all missionaries on probation for the first three years while seeing whether they could pass the test of learning a language.

A very partial list of the corpus of nineteenth-century Protestant linguistic work can fittingly begin with Henry Brunton's *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Susoo Language*, printed in Edinburgh already in 1802 well before the missionary movement had really got under way in Africa. It shows well enough where the new priorities lay. Van der Kemp's pioneering language work with the Xhosa was being done at just the same time. If we move south from the banks of the Rio Pungas where Brunton had briefly worked, we may note Gustav Nyländer's work in Sierra Leone from 1806 on Bulom Sherbro, into which he had translated Matthew's Gospel by 1812, Johann Christaller of the Basel Mission on Akan and Twi, Schlegel on Ewe, Crowther, Bowen, and Hinderer on Yoruba, Schön on Hausa and Igbo, Goldie and Robb on Efik, Bentley and Nils Westlund on Kikongo, Boyce and Appleyard on Xhosa, Schreuder and Colenso on Zulu, Moffat on Tswana, John White on Shona, Johnson on Chinyanja, Krapf and Steere on Swahili, Pilkington on Luganda. Doubtless that list is not only brief, but fairly arbitrary, leaving out as many outstanding linguists as it includes, but it covers the most renowned names apart from S. W. Koelle, the Basel-trained CMS missionary whose amazing *Polyglotta Africana*, a comparative vocabulary of nearly 300 words and phrases in more than a hundred distinct African languages, was assembled entirely at first hand by the author from among the recaptives of Sierra Leone and published in London in 1854.

There is a Harrist hymn which runs, 'Each village has its own language; Take this then to pray to our Father!'⁴¹ Language was Africa's greatest cultural glory. It was the missionaries who carried it across in scores of tongues from the oral to the written state and gave it a basic literature. They came to appreciate, as did very few other Europeans before the mid-twentieth century, its richness, copiousness, precision, yet also almost unbelievable diversity. Of course, as modern scholars like to stress, in writing it down missionaries also inevitably altered its pattern, standardizing certain forms as against others (insisting that neighbouring villages share a common form), stimulating even a sense of tribal division consequent upon the

⁴¹ J. Krabill, 'The Hymnody of the Harrist Church among the Dida of South-Central Ivory Coast', Ph.D. thesis (Birmingham, 1989), 333.

enhanced sense of language difference. The fluidity of the oral across both time and space is diminished, though not entirely lost, by the reduction to writing and the consequent urge to standardize. Such is and has always been the consequence of literacy. The social effects of missionary linguistics could be considerable, but in this area at least missionaries did not take from Africans their heritage. Rather did they defend and enrich it, by opening it to a wider usefulness with both analytical self-understanding and the capacity to absorb the wisdom of other worlds.

Catholics had not shown such consistent linguistic determination, but with them too this increased in the course of the century. On nothing was Lavigerie more insistent than that his missionaries should be masters of the local language, and they were actually forbidden to speak to each other in anything else after being six months in a place.⁴² It is doubtful whether that command was strictly adhered to, but it is certain that the White Fathers became, as a group, outstanding linguists. They were instructed to produce dictionaries, grammars, and catechisms. They were not urged to translate the Scriptures. They became excellent teachers in the vernacular, but they seldom produced a quantity of literature comparable with the Protestants, and never large translations of Scripture. Protestant vernacular Bibles had multiplied across the continent before the close of the century, Catholic ones were simply non-existent.

Undoubtedly for a correct evaluation of nineteenth-century missionaries, their linguistic work is crucial. It constituted the essential bridge. On the one hand it was the key work through which to commend the Word of God, so it was primarily evangelical. On the other hand, to understand a language intimately is also, almost inevitably, to enter into and appreciate its cultural context, the people who use it, have made it, and been made by it. It is hard to know an African language very well and not to be fond of the relevant culture and people. Through language we can experience an alien culture, both in its otherness and in its ultimate intelligibility and shared humanity. In the wrestling with construction, word, and meaning continuously involved in the learning of a language and the translation of texts, the claims of biblical primacy and cultural relativity could be wonderfully combined.

⁴² Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, 70-1, 134-5, 145, etc.

x. Christianity, Civilization, and Commerce

Evangelism and Bible translation may seem a very long way from preoccupation with 'civilization'. How was it that a movement concerned with the one could so often harp upon the other? The nineteenth-century missionary fixation with civilization—and it sometimes seems little less—requires proper explanation. And that requires some return to eighteenth-century roots. A few quotations may help, chosen almost at random except that an African exile and a British Prime Minister have been chosen to lead the team.

In proportion to the Civilization, so will be the consumption of British Manufactures. (Olaudah Equiano, 13 March 1788, in a letter to the Committee of the Privy Council Examining the Question of the Slave Trade)⁴³

I trust we shall not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the slave-trade, we give them the common chance of civilization with other parts of the world . . . If we listen to the voice of reason and duty we may live to behold the natives of Africa engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuit of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land . . . and joining their influence to that of pure religion may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent . . . (William Pitt, Prime Minister, speech in the House of Commons, 2 April 1792)⁴⁴

The authority of the British Crown is at this moment the most powerful instrument under Providence of maintaining peace and order in many extensive regions of the earth, and thereby assists in diffusing amongst millions of the human race the blessings of Christianity and civilization. (Earl Grey, 1853)⁴⁵

There had been considerable advance in civilization since I left. Many cottages have sprung up to replace the windowless and chimneyless round conical-roofed huts. Trees have been planted, wagons purchased; the valley is nearly all reclaimed and cultivated. The effects of missionary influence are undeniable and striking. (John Moffat on Kuruman, 21 March 1859)⁴⁶

We sympathize with your desire to introduce the law and order of civilized life, but we doubt whether the very extensive and rapidly developed changes in Lagos will produce anything but a forced compliance as far as British power extends and beyond it a fixed hatred and hostility to

⁴³ C. Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (1964), 111.

⁴⁴ *The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. William Pitt in the House of Commons* (1808), i. 395.

⁴⁵ *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration* (1853), i. 13–14.

⁴⁶ Wallis, *The Matabeleland Mission*, 55.

Christianity, Civilization and the white man. (Memorial from British subjects and foreign residents in Abeokuta (including CMS missionaries), 30 October 1863 to Lieutenant-General Glover)⁴⁷

In the middle decades of the century almost everyone linked together Christianity and Civilization, adding—when occasion served—Commerce or Cultivation. It was by no means a specifically missionary characteristic. These Cs need some sorting out, if they are not to mislead. They represented the public values of the mid-Victorian age together with Science, for 'Civilization and Science' could be as easily linked as 'Civilization and Commerce'. In fact, in these four terms Christianity was really the odd man out, despite the rhetoric.

The bond between Christianity and civilizing goes back to the conversion of Europe's northern tribes in the Dark Ages, and it was very clearly present in the Portuguese conception of their overseas mission in the sixteenth century. Yet for Protestants what was decisive was the new eighteenth-century preoccupation with 'civilization'—a word which only then made its appearance in English. It was indicative of what the Enlightenment was all about. In 1728 Daniel Defoe in his *Plan of the English Commerce* declared that 'The Savage Part' (of West Africa) 'would be much civiliz'd . . . and the People learn to live to be cloth'd, and to be furnish'd with many things from Europe, which they now want; and by consequence would with their Manners change the very Nature of their commerce and fall in upon the consumption of the European Manufactures.'⁴⁸ Adam Ferguson, in his influential *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), concerned with the advance of the human species 'from rudeness to civilization', saw civilization as a complex thing, at once political, intellectual, and commercial. Commerce, it was generally agreed, had a great deal to do with the spread of civilization, but Enlightenment thinkers were unlikely to suggest that Christianity had much to do with it.

The new missionary movement for its part had exceedingly little concern with civilization. Its working-class, Free Church originators were interested in evangelism, in the spread of faith and piety but not in the fruits of the Enlightenment or of British commerce. The gospel was something quite different. In 1815 the Methodist

⁴⁷ *Parliamentary Papers*, 1865, xxxvii (533) p.6 (540).

⁴⁸ D. Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1728), 253.

Missionary Committee could still write emphatically to a missionary, 'As men of God and Ambassadors for Christ you must have nothing to do with trade in any way whatever.'⁴⁹ Here were two very different worlds. It is important for us not to confuse them in their starting-points, though in due course they did for a time confuse themselves and, in consequence, their interpreters. It was the Clapham group, high-minded, upper-middle-class Anglican Evangelicals with strong commercial connections who, consciously or unconsciously, did what many thoughtful Christians try to do in every age: adapt the current secular ideology to the service of Christian morality. They argued that legitimate commerce would be far more profitable for everyone (both Africans and Liverpool merchants) than one in slavery, that it would redound far better to the advance of civilization—which, on current thinking, commerce was supposed to do—and would (here they put their own oar in) spread Christianity too. This fusion took place in the 1780s when the new missionary enthusiasm had hardly even begun. It had little to do with mission, but it did provide the justifying ideology for the Freetown settlement and the Sierra Leone Company. Founded in 1791, its first instruction to its employees appealed to 'the true principles of Commerce' but added that they should also advance 'the introduction of Christianity and Civilization'. Here we have, in the late eighteenth century, and essentially unconnected with the missionary movement, the 'Three Cs' firmly in place, put there by a group of philanthropic businessmen and public figures. For them it was less a matter of making money than of exercising their public Christian responsibility. The Sierra Leone Company proved financially disastrous (partly as a consequence of the long war with France). Its success lay in harnessing contemporary ideology in an appropriate manner to the anti-slavery cause. It was also a way, especially in the mind of Granville Sharp, its originator, of being practically helpful to the poor blacks he saw in the streets of London.

In the course of the next twenty years this same group came to patronize the new missionary enthusiasm, and to extend to the latter the vocabulary of civilization. Missionaries, working class or not, were people of their age, imbibing almost unconsciously the assumptions of its ideology. The rationale for Britain's greatness

⁴⁹ Marsden and Watson to James Lynch in India, 29 Oct. 1815, Levee Kadenge, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Wesleyan Missionary Society', M.Th. thesis (Aberdeen, 1986), 149.

and, more generally, the world supremacy of western Europe was that of commerce and civilization. Commerce, it is true, could not mean much to the ordinary missionary, being for the most part too far removed from the opportunities of his station, but civilization was different. Missionaries were much concerned with vegetable gardens and fruit trees, clean houses and water, ploughs and forges, reading and writing, hats and shoes: the simple things which they had known at home but which were in no way new in Britain and hardly in the forefront of the minds of the civilization theorists. After all, many of them had been gardeners, hatters, or cobblers. Where the theorists thought of high international commerce, large companies, the development of factories in Manchester or Leeds, the missionaries translated civilization into the simpler terms of the more homely things they themselves had some knowledge of. They no less readily adopted the jargon of civilization for what they were doing. In practice they turned 'Christianity and commerce' into 'gospel and plough'. In this sense it was almost inevitable that they should be concerned with 'civilization', though Van der Kemp had had little interest even in that. James Read, more practical than Van der Kemp, was unpreoccupied with clothes but very preoccupied with ploughs (he may, indeed, even have originated the 'gospel and plough' formula) and with this or any other way of increasing the earning power of the Khoikhoi, with whom he had thrown in his lot.

By the 1830s 'Civilization and Christianity' had become the catchphrase used by everyone from Ministers of the Crown, quite uninterested in pushing missions but concerned to present acceptably Britain's world-wide colonial enterprise, to the humblest missionary explaining the tiny developments of his own corner. John Philip, the theorist in the field, expressed a middle-of-the-road missionary viewpoint with his customary precision in a statement of 1833:

The civilization of the people among whom we labour in Africa is not our highest object; but that object never can be secured and rendered permanent among them without their civilization. Civilization is to the Christian religion what the body is to the soul . . . The blessings of civilization are a few of the blessings which the Christian religion scatters in her progress to immortality; but they are to be cherished for their own sake as well as for ours . . .⁵⁰

⁵⁰ A. Ross, *John Philip* (Aberdeen, 1986), 217.

Of course, for many a non-missionary, colonial administrator or settler, it was very much the other way round: what mattered was 'civilization' (meaning, very often, commercial employability). The missionary was to be welcomed only so long as he did not push religion too much but made certain requirements of 'civilization' his first concern.

Disagreements over which those requirements were could be no less sharp. For Philip, as for Van der Kemp, the primary requirement was political justice, while for many who called for civilization that was almost the last thing they had in mind. Bishop Colenso of Natal began his South African career as a benign imperialist exuding a liberal confidence in the spread of civilization and even, like Livingstone, calling for a large increase in white settlement; he ended it battling against the British government for justice and independence for the Zulu kingdom. Bishop Mackenzie in 1861, fired with horror of the slave-trade, found himself engaged in fighting the Yao to liberate Manganja slaves. Twenty years later John Mackenzie of the LMS was so alarmed by Boer incursions on the Tswana that he helped persuade Britain to declare a protectorate over Bechuanaland. These various ways in which the missionary endeavour was politicized were all expressions of a concern for civilization, different as they may appear from ploughs or shoes or, for that matter, from buying shares in some Glasgow-based commercial company.

For whatever reason and in whatever form nearly everyone seemed for a time agreed that the concern to civilize was incumbent upon a missionary, and not only Britons. French colonial officials were complaining that French Catholic missionaries, unlike the Protestants, did too little to civilize. Poor Père Lossadat, a Holy Ghost Father in Gabon, wrote home in 1852 that 'Some Europeans (they say French Officers) have broken the rosaries of our catechumens. They object to our approach of teaching people to pray and to chant canticles. It is not thus, says M. Bouët, Commander of the *Adour*, that one civilizes people.'⁵¹ In fact in his massive *Mémoire* of 1846 for Propaganda Fide on African missions Libermann had already firmly asserted the absolute need for civilization, and not just some low-level technical skills but the inculcation of science, 'les théories des choses'.⁵² Turn to another sphere. In 1855 Alexander Crummell, a

⁵¹ P. Coulon and D. Brasseur, *Libermann 1802-1852* (1988), 867.

⁵² *Ibid.* 249.

black clergyman from New York with a Cambridge degree, delivered an address on 'The Duty of a Rising Christian State to Contribute to the World's Well-Being and Civilization' before the Common Council and citizens of Monrovia on the day of National Independence.⁵³ This duty, he declared, would be chiefly fulfilled through 'the elevating and civilizing influence of commerce'. The citizens of Monrovia were assured that 'The Carthaginians and the Roman merchants were noted for their sterling honesty and their love of justice. People who are uncommercial are given to dissimulation, fraud and trickery.'

Here we are back, if somewhat airily, at the virtues and rewards of commerce, but in reality commerce was one bit of the trio which consistently failed to pay off, even though it was the only one thought capable of stirring the effective interest of the normal British capitalist. The first attempt to activate it had been the Sierra Leone Company. Its failure had produced Britain's take-over of its debts and the rule of Sierra Leone itself in 1807. Thirty years later T. F. Buxton reactivated the idea with his book on *The Slave Trade and its Remedy*, published in 1839 first. Wilberforce's chosen successor, Buxton, had steered the abolition of slavery in the British Empire through Parliament in 1833, but the trade continued largely unaffected (carrying slaves to Brazil, Cuba, and the United States). Buxton now revived the idea of extinguishing it through the stimulation of alternative forms of commerce, and created enormous enthusiasm in Britain with a proposal to establish large commercial plantations—Read's 'plough' magnified a thousandfold. Out of the enthusiasm came the disastrous Niger expedition of 1841. It was simply not possible to set up a viable large-scale alternative commerce overnight.

After 1841 the commerce model was once more set aside until Livingstone revived it in the late 1850s, on returning from his great transcontinental journey. For the next quarter-century his message of 'the double influence of the spirit of commerce and Christianity' as being what was needed 'to stay the bitter fountain of African misery'⁵⁴ became again a widely accepted orthodoxy, especially in Scottish circles. Hence new trading companies like the West African Company formed in 1863, the African Lakes Company in 1878, and the British East Africa Company in 1888, all with close mission

⁵³ Alexander Crummell, *The Future of Africa* (New York, 1862), 57-104, passage quoted 71-2.

⁵⁴ Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, 258.

connections. The Lakes Company's connections were particularly close—to the Livingstonia mission—and it was exceptionally unsuccessful. It is interesting that James Stewart, whose appeal it had been in 1874 to the Free Church of Scotland to establish 'a great centre of commerce, civilization and Christianity' in memory of Livingstone, was three years later writing, 'I hope none of my friends of the mission in Glasgow will have anything to do with *big trading schemes* for Lake Nyassa at present . . . Trade must grow little by little and a large expenditure at first means certainly a big loss.'⁵⁵ That was the voice of the missionary realist in contrast to that of the orator, but it was not heeded to. The Glasgow businessmen were resolved on a trading company and, perhaps, without the illusion of quick commerce they would not have backed missions as they did. In a sense the whole of this history is one in which missionary enthusiasts and their business friends deceived each other into believing in the possibility that profit and piety could be combined.

If missionaries of the late nineteenth century were, in the main, pretty cool about any link between their work and commerce, it was drink more than anything else which made them so. In August 1876 the steamer *Ethiopia* left Liverpool bound for the Nigerian coast, carrying one missionary, Mary Slessor, and a cargo of spirits. Six years later the *Ethiopia* was wrecked on rocks just off Loango and it is said that the rum seized as it was breaking up caused the deaths of 200 people. The first Baptist missionaries to the Congo arrived in 1879 on a boat loaded with gin. Earlier missionaries had arrived on slave-ships. Now 'legitimate' commerce had been substituted. In place of slaves, gin. It is hardly surprising that the late Victorian Evangelical shied away from Livingstone's enthusiasm for the commercial model.

In missionary jargon the word 'industrial' came much to be preferred to the word 'commerce'. 'Industrial' was a step up from the plough. It signified a more systematic stress on technical skills in a way that was only possible in larger centres like Livingstonia and Lovedale, though the name would come to be adopted by many smaller enterprises as well. The central missionary 'institute' became increasingly the ideal of the civilizing school—less ambitious and prone to corruption than the commercial company but rather more sophisticated than the 'gospel and plough' formula. The Industrial Mission is the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century favourite

for people with this approach, aware of the dangers to which the commerce ideal almost inevitably led—drink, bankruptcy, or a take-over by European settlers. For white settlement is what Christianity and Commerce seemed inevitably to lead to if it was to succeed in terms of profit in the immediate term. And white settlement was, indeed, what Livingstone had had in mind. Maybe missionary recognition that this sort of culmination to the commercial pursuit would not be to the long-term advantage of Africans helped induce them to pull back from implementation of Livingstone's ideal. Yet in fact, on the west coast at least, the plough and the commercial marketing of its products by a new African farming class did actually succeed. We can see it particularly in the development of cocoa in Nigeria and then the Gold Coast at the turn of the century. In South Africa too and, later, in central Africa small-scale black commercial farming would have succeeded had it not been for white competitors determined that it should not do so. Settler farming needed black labour and did not want the rivalry of a profit-making black peasantry. Only where there were no settlers, as in the west or Uganda, did the commerce model finally work to black advantage: and to Christian advantage too, because in such cases the black community making profitable use of the plough was also the core of a local Church. So there proved to be, after all, a measure of sense in the commerce model. What was wrong with it was the narrow time-scale its backers in Britain inevitably looked for.

Nevertheless, there were always missionaries and, still more, missionary planners who had their doubts about this whole line of thought. 'Civilization' meant something different to everyone who used it. It secularized the mission and idealized Europe. A highly intelligent, rather sceptical, Italian Franciscan missionary, in declaring his preference in 1850 for Ethiopia over Italy, could refer mockingly to 'civilizzatissima Europa'.⁵⁶ The guide-lines of Propaganda Fide, ever since the seventeenth century, had been opposed to all unnecessary Europeanization, and what was the whole civilization school concerned with other than that? It is striking that Lavigerie, with all his devotion to the example of Livingstone, appears almost never to speak of civilization. On the contrary, he insisted, in his great *Instruction* to the missionaries of equatorial Africa of 1879:

⁵⁶ Letter of 26 Oct. 1850, cf. C. Conti Rossini, *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, 5/29 (1920), 216.

⁵⁵ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 43-4.

From the material aspect we must leave Africans as they are, that is to say truly Africans. We must shut our eyes and hearts to a false pity . . . and resign ourselves to see the young negroes close to us maintain the customs of their land, their wattle huts instead of houses, their bare earth in place of beds, sorghum and manioc instead of bread, grass waist bands in place of shirt and trousers.⁵⁷

If Protestant missionaries seem to have been rather easily carried away by the 'civilization' model, it may be because they had so little of a real missionary doctrine to fall back upon, over and above a great enthusiasm for world evangelism. But so soon as they began to develop a doctrine, they started to recognize the danger. It is noticeable that Henry Venn had very little interest in civilizing, and indeed increasingly recognized how opposed it could be to the early realization of his ideal, the self-governing Church. The establishment of a native Church required the adoption of African ways, not the imposition of European ones. It is odd that it was Livingstone with all his African intuition who confused the whole movement by plunging back from a concern with native agency into one which ceaselessly harped on the vocabulary of civilization and pursued the goals of Western commerce and settlement. But at the very same time that he was reinvigorating the civilization school, Venn, Lavigerie, and others like Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, were guiding the central core of the missionary movement emphatically away from preoccupation with civilization towards the acceptance of cultural diversity and non-European ways as crucial to a missionary's central purpose.

By the 1880s an extreme point was reached by some radical Evangelicals following the Hudson Taylor line on adaptation. Two young upper-class English enthusiasts, Graham Wilmot Brooke and John Alfred Robinson, in proposing a new CMS mission up the Niger to the Hausa, were particularly outspoken. Brooke, a somewhat unbalanced extremist, had for years been trying to escape from any part of Africa affected by, as he saw it, the contaminating curse of Western commercialization and concern for the this-worldly values of civilization. 'We carefully avoid praising civilization or civilized powers to the heathen,' they wrote in 1891. 'If they themselves are extolling civilization we tell them that they should not set their affection on things below.'⁵⁸ Here was the

⁵⁷ Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, 98.

⁵⁸ CMS, Sudan Mission Leaflet, no. 18, Feb. 1891, A. Walls, 'Black Europeans, White Africans: Some Missionary Motives in West Africa', in D. Baker (ed.), *Religious Motivation*, SCH xv (1978), 347–8.

resurgence of pure evangelicalism with a vengeance, but it remained untypical of CMS men, even of that Keswick-influenced period, at least in so extreme a form.

UMCA attitudes were not all that different, and more consistent. 'Our desire is to distinguish very clearly between Christianising and Europeanising', wrote Bishop Smythies in 1892. 'What we want is to Christianise them in their own civil and political conditions; to help them to develop a Christian civilization suited to their own climate and their own circumstances. For instance, we do not allow any of the boys in our schools to wear any European clothing; it is not our business to encourage the trade in boots . . .'⁵⁹ Next year the Synod of the Diocese of Zanzibar resolved to 'strenuously discourage all Europeanisms'.⁶⁰ Of course, this remained a minority position just as heavy civilizing remained a minority position. In between were the large majority, Europeanizing in some ways (and no book-learning could be done without a measure of Europeanizing), endeavouring to adapt to African ways in others. Dr Laws of Livingstonia was a distinguished but autocratic representative of the civilizing line while Archdeacon Johnson, who enjoyed at times the hospitality of Dr Laws when he was more than usually unwell and in need of a rest, was a fine and unusually unautocratic representative of the Africanizing. Both spent fifty years on Lake Nyasa and both have had their admirers, black and white. For Johnson, the Church must be above all 'a true native development and not a foreign intrusion. This must be insisted on by keeping its thought, its agents, its appointments as entirely native as possible.'⁶¹ Laws, on the other hand, wanted to give the very best of Scotland to Africa—he even planned a tower at his Overtoun Institute just like that of King's College, Aberdeen! The Scots were the greatest of civilizers. Donald Fraser, a younger member of the Livingstonia Mission moving mildly in a different direction, could smile at Laws's dictum that to teach an African to lay bricks in a straight line was a great step towards civilization, but, of course, a lot of Africans were grateful for such lessons and without them the Christian Church and its institutions would have been far less attractive than they were. Johnson's far

⁵⁹ G.W. (Gertrude Ward), *The Life of Charles Alan Smythies* (1898), 190.

⁶⁰ Diocese of Zanzibar, *Acts of the Synods*, 1884–1903, 18; see also W. P. Johnson's defence in the *Nyasa News* of 1894 of this position, written as 'An Answer' to one who said 'You must accept your position as being not only messengers of the Gospel, but representatives of civilization', E. H. Barnes, *Johnson of Nyasaland* (1935), 106–7.

⁶¹ Barnes, *Johnson of Nyasaland*, 140.

quieter, less disruptive, approach needed more time, and in late nineteenth-century Africa time was more limited than it may have seemed.

At the end of the day, Henri Junod, a remarkable Swiss missionary scholar, added up the pros and cons of 'civilization' in the conclusion of his *Life of a South African Tribe*, published in 1912. He listed the blessings of civilization, among them the disappearance of deadly famines, improved clothing (which he thought only a 'mixed blessing'), better seeds and agricultural implements, a broadening of ideas. But the 'curses of civilization' he judged far to exceed the blessings, at least in South Africa, and first among them he listed 'Loss of political interest and responsibility'.⁶² For Adam Ferguson, in the eighteenth century, it was the political which, more than anything else, defined civilization. Now it is noticeable how consistently Johnson urged a scrupulous respect for African political authority, even of a rather minuscule form. Perhaps the 'anti-civilizers' had the deeper sense of civilization, even in terms of the Enlightenment, while the civilizers were continually in danger of disrupting civilization by concentrating upon the technical to the dissolution of the socio-political.

The ideology of the nineteenth-century missionary movement began with a simple evangelical individualism grounded upon the Bible first and last. As we have seen, it quickly joined to this a second more worldly thread which may loosely be characterized as 'civilization', an undefined additional component, formally rejected by rather few, but, equally, central to the thought of rather few. It seemed at least a happy way of persuading the secular scoffer that missionaries were a good thing earning their keep in terms of the public good. It also served to justify a great deal of highly 'secular' activity on the mission station which, in strictly evangelical terms, might be hard to defend. A secular component to mission seemed a natural enough adjunct to anyone other than the narrowest evangelist; for a minority it became a quite central concern. It could take an anti-slavery form with some, a struggle for political rights with others, a general interest in benevolent improvement with a third group, an alliance with Western commerce for the opening-up of the world with a fourth. Van der Kemp and Philip battled with the Cape government for Khoikhoi rights, Moffat irrigated the valley

⁶² Henri Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, ii (1912), 540.

of Kuruman, Livingstone encouraged grandiose schemes of European commerce, Bishop Mackenzie reluctantly led his missionary colleagues into various tiny wars for the freeing of slaves: these were extremely different approaches to the business of spreading civilization, but they concur in showing that part of the missionary task was a secular and worldly one.

xi. *The Three Selves and the Pursuit of Adaptation*

There was, however, a third important strand within missionary purpose, a strand which, present at first hardly more than implicitly, became at least for the theorists increasingly decisive. It developed in response to circumstance and experience, the exigencies of a second and third generation, pondered by the more far-sighted theorists sitting at home, responsible for planning the strategy of the main societies. Greatest of these upon the Protestant side was undoubtedly Henry Venn, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1841 to 1872, though a very considerable influence upon Venn himself was Rufus Anderson, Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission. Venn's father, John, had been Rector of Clapham and first chairman of the CMS, so Henry was a natural heir to the central Anglican Evangelical tradition, yet in his own thought he would seem to distance himself from the more liberationist and civilizing preoccupations of the first Clapham generation.

The CMS was essentially a lay organization, and, while it stressed the use of 'Church' in its title, it had behind it and its early mission practice little more ecclesiology than that of the LMS. Its task, as it at first saw it, was to send out people, lay or clergy, men or women, to preach the gospel and spread a knowledge of the Bible. It is hardly surprising that the bishops were suspicious of it. Only the very year that Venn became Secretary did the archbishops accept a regular relationship with the Society after an agreement had been negotiated by Bishop Blomfield of London and Venn himself. This was important not only for a clarification of the Anglican character of the CMS at home, but, much more, as a step towards achieving a more genuinely ecclesiological understanding of the missionary enterprise itself.

For Anderson and Venn, it was becoming increasingly clear that the task of the missionary was not just to go abroad to preach and convert people or even to translate and spread afar the Scriptures.

There were far too many people to preach to; missionaries were seldom well equipped to evangelize in foreign languages; those that were sent too often died before they had done anything of much note. No, the task of preaching to the foreign multitude must belong to a local Church in each and every place. The task of the foreign missionary is to go where there is as yet no local Church in order to establish one. Once a native Church is functioning, he can and should move on. A self-governing Church is to be followed by the 'euthanasia' of the mission, a word of which Venn became fond and was already using by 1844. Once a self-supporting, self-governing, self-extending Church exists within a society, 'a Native Church under Native Pastors and a Native Episcopate' as Venn described it in 1858,⁶³ it is the duty of the foreign missionary either to advance to 'the regions beyond' or to integrate as some sort of auxiliary worker within the native Church. Until the middle of the century, Protestant missionaries had hardly at all thought in such terms; from then on they frequently did so, even if in many a case they remained deeply reluctant to implement the concept in practice. It was Venn most of all who brought about the change, particularly in a series of memoranda dated from around 1850.

The ordination of Samuel Crowther in 1843, first of CMS African ordinations, was already the indication of a new direction, and Crowther's outstanding intellectual and moral quality naturally reinforced it. People were soon suggesting his appointment to the episcopate. Over that Venn himself actually held back, only too aware of the reluctance of missionaries in the field to accept it but unsure too as to what his diocese should be. Crowther was made a bishop in 1864, the high point of achievement of Venn's strategy. The 'native agent' could now be seen, not as a useful supplement to the missionary, but quite the other way round, as the mission's goal and crown. A similar shift was going on in many non-episcopal missions, a shift in missionary thought from preacher to Church-planter. However, it was with Venn and the CMS that the shift was made most clearly, and just at the high time of the Victorian age when the Church of England was itself undergoing a shift in consciousness in the post-Tractarian era. Venn's position in this was somewhat paradoxical. While the CMS was self-consciously Evangelical, and Venn himself was always seen as a great Evangelical spokesman, he

⁶³ C. P. Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church* (Leiden, 1990), 17.

was in this, the most crucial of his roles, in reality catholicizing, because ecclesiasticizing, what had been an overly Protestant activity.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the most influential of missionary societies was the LMS. In the second half it was, undoubtedly, the CMS. The shift was only across a mile of London, from Blomfield Street in Finsbury to Salisbury Square, just west of St Paul's. In terms of personality it was from the slightly colourless Arthur Tidman to the more impressive and intellectually innovative Henry Venn. Yet Tidman's approach does not seem significantly different from that of Venn, and one can detect, for instance, in his correspondence with Livingstone in the 1840s, a certain impatience at how little the missionaries in the field were actually doing to further the 'important object' of native agency.⁶⁴ What made all the public difference was Crowther's episcopal consecration. In principle, and in practice too, Protestants were learning at this point much what Catholics had learnt a great deal earlier. One might see Henry Venn as the Ingoli of the Protestant world. But, just as Catholics failed to implement the vision effectively, so would Protestants find it exceedingly hard to do. The deep reluctance of missionaries actually to hand over, the evidence of native failings, the argument for caution and delay, all would be much the same on the one side as on the other. Yet Protestants were in some ways better placed to implement such a policy because they were at least not tied by Roman canon law, which again and again ruled out realistic adaptation to the needs of a viable local Church.

The 1840s, Venn's first decade as Secretary in Salisbury Square, was also a good decade for Catholic missionary rethinking. His nearest counterpart was Francis Libermann, whose missionary instructions written at various dates between 1840 and his death in 1852 were in their way as remarkable as those of Venn. It is true that his stress upon the importance of forming a native priesthood, strong as it was, did not differ from the Roman viewpoint as it had continually been stressed by Propaganda Fide. He took it over also through his friendship with Mother Javouhey, who had sent from Senegal a group of young men, three of whom were ordained in Paris in the seminary of the Holy Ghost in 1840. It would not be pointless to compare the achievements and frustrations in the life of Samuel

⁶⁴ See his letter to Livingstone of 6 Sept. 1847, or those of 30 Dec. 1845 and 23 Dec. 1848, Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, 85–6, 109–10, 125–6.

Crowther with those in the career of the Abbé Boilat. One does, however, detect in Libermann a stronger sense than was customary in Catholic literature that the object was not just to ordain local priests but to establish 'la forme stable d'une Église'.⁶⁵ 'a Church' is important, it is a phrase to be noted. Libermann stresses that the universal Church consists of 'particular Churches'. A Church outside Europe is not just a clerical extension of the one Church centred in Europe, it is a Church of its own and needs to become all that any one of the Churches in Europe may be. Above all, it must not remain 'a mission'. He recognized that the health of a Church is impossible without an adequate degree of civilization in its society, but, equally, he stressed that the duty of the missionary is not to impose his European mentality. It is, on the contrary, to reshape his own attitudes according to the culture he has come to. Hence that famous phrase of Libermann, to be found in the letter to the community of Dakar and Gabon of November 1847: 'Faites-vous nègres avec les nègres.'

Empty yourselves of Europe, of its manners and mentality; make yourselves blacks with the blacks, then you will understand them as they should be understood; make yourselves blacks with the blacks to form them as they should be, not in the way of Europe, but leaving them what is their own; behave towards them as servants would behave to their masters, adapting to the customs, attitudes and habits of their masters.⁶⁶

Such spiritually and culturally radical teaching was doubtless most imperfectly implemented: the typical Holy Ghost Father of the late nineteenth century behaved quite otherwise. It is important to recall all the same that such teaching was given, and by one of the great missionary founders. It represents very much what, on the Protestant side, Van der Kemp had already been doing and what much later W. P. Johnson and Charles de Foucauld would endeavour to do, but only the most steely-willed masters of self-abnegation can realize such ideals.

Libermann was followed by Bresillac, Comboni, and Lavigerie, all of whom founded new missionary societies for Africa. They all stressed the need for a local priesthood, and their admirers have too easily in each case judged their hero as an innovator in this. They were not. Many had tried before, and the new societies, at least until

⁶⁵ *Mémoire* of Aug. 1846, Coulon and Brasseur, *Libermann*, 239.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 518.

well into the twentieth century, would have no more success, perhaps less, than missionaries of earlier ages. The bar remained canon law: the obligation to be fluent in Latin and bound to celibacy. As a matter of fact, Lavigerie's genius may be recognized, paradoxically, not in pushing a native priesthood, but in recognizing so clearly how unrealistic it was to hope for one in such circumstances. He therefore proposed to substitute for it an order of married medical catechists: 'There is no salvation outside marriage,' 'Il n'y a d'autre salut que le mariage.'⁶⁷ For him 'the most essential of all works' became the 'training of Christian doctors'.⁶⁸ When this, too, came to be seen as manifestly inadequate, Lavigerie suggested to the Pope in 1890 that Africa should be allowed a married priesthood.⁶⁹ Only after the rejection of that proposal, at the very end of his life, did he turn back with determination to the traditional attempt to develop a celibate priesthood.

Lavigerie is the best known and most praised of the nineteenth-century founders, largely because of the subsequent achievements of the White Fathers. He was an exceptionally powerful character with a continually probing intellect, but his principal ideas for a new missionary strategy proved largely misguided despite the imagination which went into them. A few doctors were trained in Malta, some of them remarkable men, but no one else was very happy with this project, and it was soon abandoned. Later on it proved hard enough for White Fathers to work with black priests; to have worked closely with an entirely new order of married black doctors would, indeed, have been miraculous. Again, Lavigerie's preoccupation with the conversion of kings and the establishment of a Christian kingdom was shared by others and there seemed some ground for it; yet, basically, it was a medieval throwback and, in the world of the British Empire, kings anyway usually preferred to be Anglican if anything. What his missionaries were left with was the common Catholic practice of buying young slaves to train in 'orphanages' and Christian villages. It was an enterprise which, while ostensibly part of an anti-slavery campaign, in fact merely encouraged the trade by producing regular buyers. It created an effectively captive Christian community, but seldom a very resilient one. Catholic preoccupation with this

⁶⁷ Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, 99.

⁶⁸ Renault, *Lavigerie: L'esclavage africain et l'Europe* (Paris, 1971), i. 164.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 228.

approach through the latter years of the century only demonstrated how far they remained behind the better Protestant work.

Lavigerie's lasting legacy lay elsewhere: in his general insistence (in line with Libermann) upon establishing a viable Church, upon assimilating oneself to Africa, upon the learning of languages superlatively, and upon the re-establishment of a lengthy and structured catechumenate. These insistences served the White Fathers well; add to them the lesson of their unique Buganda experience and their taking to heart, more than anyone else, and that perhaps because of the impact upon them of the Baganda martyrs, the Roman insistence upon the development of a native priesthood, and one has the combination of qualities which made of the White Fathers a missionary force of unsurpassed vigour and consistency in the interior of Africa by the end of the nineteenth century. The Protestant example even drew them into rather more Scripture translation than was customary for Catholics.

Catholic and Protestant missionaries often behaved very differently in the nineteenth century, just as they generally looked different: a presence of cassocks and an absence of wives were both highly noticeable. Nevertheless, in fact, Protestants had moved in a distinctly 'Catholic' direction while Catholics had, for their part, learnt rather more than they might care to admit from Protestants. What remains most significant is that the main thrust of Protestant concern had shifted from the eschatological to the ecclesiological. While each could make some use of the language of 'civilization', for neither was it a central preoccupation. The eschatological tended to the destruction of African culture, the ecclesiological to be adaptationist. Venn and Lavigerie represent a common choice to put Church formation and cultural adaptation first. Neither, however, was a radical. They were both too near the centre of ecclesiastical power for that. Nor were their societies by any means fully faithful to their vision. Nevertheless, the CMS and the White Fathers became the two most influential missionary bodies at work in Africa, and the impact upon them of the ideas of Venn and Lavigerie was a major enduring factor in the shaping of African Christianity.

xii. *What Missionaries Thought of Africa*

What, finally, was the Victorian missionary's image of Africa, the image the missionaries themselves possessed, rather than that which

popular missionary literature presented at home? 'O the blindness, the darkness, the foolishness of heathenism!', lamented Anna Hinderer in Ibadan in the 1860s.⁷⁰ 'Darkness' is unquestionably a recurring note in the missionary image of Africa. And it was easily taken over by the first generation of converts. 'Our mission stations', wrote Samuel Crowther a few years later, 'are as encampments from which we sally out to wage aggressive war with the powers of darkness.'⁷¹ It would not be hard to multiply verbal examples a thousandfold. It was, in common parlance, the 'Dark Continent'. But here, as with 'civilization', we find a large variety of meanings. It was 'dark' because Europeans, or indeed anyone, knew little about it as a whole. Its vast interior was still largely unmapped when Hinderer and Crowther wrote. It was 'dark' because it lacked the indications of civilization which even the most emphatic upholder of the view that civilization depended upon Christianity could not deny finding in India or China. It was 'dark' because of European and Arab crimes perpetrated upon it over the centuries: the slave-trade and subsequent colonial oppression weighed heavily on the missionary conscience, producing a stress on the need for reparation. It was 'dark' most of all because it was 'heathen' and corrupted by all sorts of terrible practices. The heart of all this darkness in the European imagination combined atrocities both black and white, while for the missionary mind it was all bound up with the realm of the 'Prince of Darkness', the devil. Finally, it was 'dark'—though missionaries would mostly have found difficulty in focusing upon this underlying, more psychological, theme—because its inhabitants were 'dark'. Their colour mysteriously symbolized all other meanings.

Let us start with the last point by recalling Blake's poem 'The Little Black Boy'. Perhaps he had in mind one of those page-boys who appear quite often in portraits of the eighteenth-century aristocracy.

My mother bore me in the southern wild
And I am black, but O, my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

Undoubtedly Blake was struggling in the poem to find a positive point to negritude—'these black bodies' are 'like a shady grove', but we see here in the deliberately sympathetic poem of a radical mystic

⁷⁰ Anna Hinderer, *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* (1872), 213.

⁷¹ Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland*, 41.

an underlying European and Christian problem: in biblical and Christian symbolism 'white' is good, 'black' is bad; one signifies life, the other death. Africans (rather seldom so called) were Ethiopians, Negroes, characterized by their 'black' skins. They were thought, moreover, to belong to the race of Ham and to fall in consequence under the biblical 'curse' of Canaan (Genesis 9: 25-7). Some Catholic missionaries, at least, continued to believe that this curse applied to Africans well into the twentieth century. Blake's poem points to the Western linkage of skin colour and moral state. The black child is 'as if bereaved of light', suffering from some sort of spiritual blindness. Few missionaries if any will have thought this sort of thing out, but the almost platitudinous use of the word 'dark' for Africa probably owed as much to it as to anything else. As African cultures have, many of them, a similar pattern of colour symbolism, it was not hard for African Christians to take over the terminology rather easily.

The missionary use of 'darkness' is most often related to straight lack of Christian belief and, particularly, to such moral behaviour as seemed particularly awful, consequent upon 'superstition'. Anna Hinderer's outburst—and on the whole her judgements on African society were positive enough—was in connection with a human sacrifice offered on the outbreak of war. Human sacrifices, witch-hunts, the raids on their neighbours of warrior peoples like the Ndebele, were what most frequently prompted such remarks, and they very easily led in evangelical parlance to a reference to the diabolical character of the practices in question. Darkness and the devil went together. Undoubtedly the public moral evils of Africa were more glaring to missionary eyes than those of Europe, some of them hardly less awful. But the darkness which the missionary felt he had 'sallied out' to fight seems often a good deal vaguer than that. The New Testament and subsequent religious literature is so full of dark-light images, as of allusions to spiritual warfare, it was inevitable that highly committed Christians should identify their labours in such terms. Wesley was only too insistent upon the darkness of the villages and slums of England. There was often nothing so different about missionary references to darkness in Africa. It was no more than the common discourse of Evangelicalism. For Pilkington, speaking in 1896, there were 'three forms of darkness' to be fought in Africa, 'Heathenism, Mohammedanism and Popery'⁷² and many an

⁷² Harford-Battersby, *Pilkington of Uganda*, 224.

Evangelical would have agreed with that. Ireland and Italy were characterized as 'dark' in a not dissimilar way. In the end 'darkness' for the committed missionary came to have rather little to do with Africa as such. It had come to represent the unacceptable superstition of any religion other than one's own.

Much in the most negative and painful passages in popular Victorian missionary literature about Africa comes from the pens of mission organizers and backers who were never in the field. Nevertheless, there were undoubtedly many missionaries who produced an almost incredibly negative image of Africa. Bishop Knight-Bruce, Eton and Oxford, toured Mashonaland in 1888 to prepare the way for a mission. He does not seem to have been unkindly received, but could write, nevertheless,

No-one, who had not had dealings with the heathen savage, would credit what a repulsive degradation of humanity he is: seeming to combine the high development of rascality and cunning as found in the professional London thief with a shamelessness which few of them have, while their miserable stupidity, in nearly every case where their own interests are not concerned, is only to be appreciated by those who have been subjected to it.⁷³

Yet he could also describe the Shona as 'a gentle, industrious and skilful people'. Knight-Bruce rapidly wore himself out as Bishop of Mashonaland. He had much of the self-confident arrogance of the late Victorian imperialist, but flashes also of a more humane discernment. At the end of his life he could write, 'I feel deeply how constantly I misjudged both my Christian and heathen natives.'⁷⁴

Few missionaries were racialists. The very universalism implicit in their calling made it difficult for them to be so. They stressed again and again—often against fashionable Western opinion, with its increasingly racist overtones—the intelligence, ability, rationality, and even high moral qualities of the unconverted people among whom they worked, and still more of course the achievements of their converts. They long expatiated on the virtues of a Khama or a Crowther. Occasionally they could delight in the closest of friendships, as Pilkington could write to his mother on the death of Sembera Mackay, 'Oh, Mother, you don't know how I loved him,

⁷³ C. Fripp (ed.), *Gold and the Gospel in Mashonaland 1888*, the first part being the Mashonaland Journal of Bishop Knight-Bruce, (1949), 54.

⁷⁴ G. W. H. Knight-Bruce, *Memories of Mashonaland* (1895), 161.

love him still with all my soul; everyone loved him; the best, the bravest, the noblest, the wisest. Never to see his kind face in this world again or hear his cheery voice . . . I couldn't even bid him good-bye for the last time.'⁷⁵ 'Unreasonableness cannot be said to be a more obstinate hereditary complaint in Africa than in Ireland,' declared Livingstone provocatively. 'If one behaves as a gentleman, he will invariably be treated as such.'⁷⁶ In their approach to Africans, John Philip admitted in 1846, missionaries were of 'two different classes'.⁷⁷

What is esteemed and practised as a virtue by one is viewed as a crime in the eyes of the other . . . Both parties would do the Coloured people good but in different ways. In order to raise the people James Read would treat them as brethren and to this Mr Calderwood says 'we object' . . . Both parties love the people but the one shows it in a way which the people like better than the other and they cannot be blamed for it. A missionary who was afraid of spoiling the people by shaking hands with them said to me the other day 'I never saw the like of these Hottentots, you can do nothing with them by scolding them, you may do anything with them by kindness'.

One kind of behaviour went with a deep sense of brotherhood and common humanity, the other with a sense of superiority over the 'savages' whom they had a mission to improve. The difference was probably less a religious or ideological one than the psychological ability or inability to identify, to recognize the existence of a common culture. In a similar way Gobat recognized it in Ethiopia twelve years earlier, but his colleagues did not. He compared his approach, a little sadly, with that of Isenberg. While he hoped to reach 'the heart of the Abyssinians' by adopting their way of eating, dressing, and so forth, 'Brother Isenberg hopes to have more influence upon them by keeping at a distance.'⁷⁸ Livingstone remarked that the stories he heard from his grandfather in the Highlands were 'wonderfully like those I have heard while sitting by the African evening fires'.⁷⁹ Perhaps a rural background helped more than an urban one in enabling the anthropologically untrained missionary make the great leap of cultural understanding across chasms of otherness to recognition of the 'wonderfully like' and

⁷⁵ Harford-Battersby, *Pilkington of Uganda*, 183.

⁷⁶ Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, 298.

⁷⁷ Ross, *John Philip*, 93.

⁷⁸ D. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians* (1972), 40.

⁷⁹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, 1.

escape from the inclination of 'keeping at a distance'. The sheer will to identify was important, and married missionaries, when half settlers themselves and anxious to belong to a settler community, almost never had that will at all. But the most decisive factor may have been a real working knowledge of language. It is often hard to know when this existed, as the regular use of interpreters is easily omitted from the record. Inevitably when we discuss missionaries it is largely in terms of the more outstanding, most of whom were excellent linguists, but they were a small minority. There were many others who can never have had a really serious conversation in an African language. Without mastery of the language the stereotype of 'the savage' easily prevailed. With it and a growing awareness of the endless subtleties of the language the key to cultural admiration had been acquired.

Across a rich linguistic knowledge, and only across it, could some missionaries build up an organic grasp of culture, mentality, and religion, so that the impression of 'savagery' dissolved into one of a certain reasonableness. There were men, like Moffat, who could master the language but, despite his quite remarkable friendship with Moselekatse, could never quite master the culture. Without the language, the further step was hardly feasible.

François Coillard was someone who had lived for many years with the Basotho and then for many more with the Lozi. Like Livingstone he found it hard to co-operate with whites but was deeply sympathetic to blacks and close enough to each people to detect and to enjoy the differences. 'The Basotho, like the Athenians, are all, and always, on the scent of something new,' he wrote, yet they have too a 'grave and respectful politeness'. What struck him about the Lozi, on the other hand, was 'their incredible levity. They laugh and scoff at everything and everybody . . . Here, to live is literally to amuse yourself. All is frivolity.'⁸⁰ In comments like these one is being given an image of Africa by someone who has entered into its life in its rich diversity and sees it, as he might different nations of Europe, with the affectionate but critical eye of a real friend.

Livingstone's charming, and justly famous, little account of the conversation between a medical doctor and a rain doctor⁸¹ is an early example of such fond interpretation by the outsider who has become

⁸⁰ Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, 416-17.

⁸¹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, ch. 1.

an insider. It must have helped many on the way to a more positive presentation of the African mind. Just a little later one cannot but be impressed by the very careful ethnographic account of the Dinka and the Bari by Fr. Anton Kaufmann, one of the remarkable group at Gondokoro in the late 1850s.⁸² Then came works like Canon Callaway's *Religious System of the Amazulu* (1870) and Duff MacDonald's *Africana* (1882). Still more mature, as sympathetic anthropological interpretation, are John Roscoe's *The Baganda* (1911) and Henri Junod's *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912). While these were published well into the twentieth century both men had been in Africa since the late 1880s.⁸³ For many of their missionary contemporaries such works were pointless. Archdeacon Walker condemned Roscoe's anthropological and historical researches as a matter of hunting 'in the dustbin and rubbish heaps of Uganda for the foolish and unclean customs of the people long thrown away'.⁸⁴ Yet Walker was an intelligent man with a great knowledge of the language and far deeper African sympathies than many, while Roscoe's anthropological concerns led him to give up missionary work and move to Cambridge. Sympathizing and belittling attitudes to Africans, their culture and history, could take a variety of forms but would continue to face one another, often ambiguously, within a single missionary society as they had done in Philip's time. That was true of both Catholic and Protestant, though upon each side there was a bad rump, with some missionary groups almost wholly uncomprehending.

Of the late Victorians the Swiss Protestant Henri Junod was *facile princeps*. No one else living in Africa before the arrival of the first academic anthropologists produced anything nearly as fine as his study of the Ronga people, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, comprehensive and comprehending. There was in truth no one missionary image of Africa any more than there was one missionary ideology, and one certainly finds some of the most racist and uncomprehending of missionaries at just this time, the decades of the imperialist high tide. Yet if at times it is allowable to judge an

⁸² A. Kaufmann, *Das Gebiet des weissen Flusses und dessen Bewohner* (Brixen, 1881) in part translated and republished in Elias Toniolo and Richard Hill, *The Opening of the Nile Basin* (1974) 140-95.

⁸³ Note too Junod's earlier 300-page work, *Les Chants et les contes des Ba-Ronga de la Baie de Delogoo: Recueillis et transcrits*, published already in Lausanne in 1897.

⁸⁴ J. Waliggo, 'The Catholic Church in the Buddu Province of Buganda', Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1976), 272.

organization or a movement in terms of the finest it can produce, so long as that is not of a merely maverick nature but consistent with a wider achievement, then, exceptional as it remains, Junod's masterpiece may be allowed to represent the image of Africa as depicted by the Victorian missionary.