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**University of Kent**

**Title:** “Them Women Be Best Man for Missions”: Women and Missions in  
Nineteenth-Century British West Africa

**Name:** Clive Jolliffe

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### **Abstract**

Africa occupies a special place within missionary history. It was seen in the nineteenth century as the dark continent which needed to be saved and missionaries set out to do this. The thesis shows how women were essential to this effort. It was not just the wives, widows and single female missionaries who worked overseas who were vital for missionary work but also essential were those women who worked at home to provide the support necessary for missionary enterprise. The West African women whom the missionaries believed they came to save were also an important aspect of missionary work. The thesis looks at how all these women came together in the missionary effort in British West Africa from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of W.W.I., placing them in the context of contemporary society. The work of five major missionary societies is looked at in the four countries which eventually comprised British West Africa.

Missionary work was one of the few areas in the 19th century which women could appropriate. It was not just overseas that they could do this. In Britain they were able to control and run large organisations which provided opportunities for women to show what they could do given the opportunity. The Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was one such organisation and is examined in the thesis, as is the training and recruitment of female candidates. In West Africa wives, widows and single female agents all made their own important contributions to the missionary work. They developed a wide range of skills, especially in working with local women and children. This thesis examines the ways in which they did this and also what they were not able to do. The missionary heroine was an important part of the promotion of the missionary cause and her role is looked at and compared with the depiction of missionary women in 19th century fiction.

The missionaries came to change society in West Africa and local women were not exempted. Missionaries brought with them ideas about polygyny and domestic slavery which affected women particularly. What this meant for African women and how they responded is a particular feature of the thesis.

### **Note on Abbreviations**

CEZMS	Church of England Zenana Missionary Society
CMS	Church Missionary Society
OLA	Order of Our Lady of Apostles
SMA	Society of African Missions
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Bible in Foreign Parts
SPCK	Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge
UBC	Church of the United Brethren in Christ
WMS	Women's Missionary Association of the UBC
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### I. General

In her long essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf expressed her dismay at the lack of recognition of woman's role in history – 'She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history'.<sup>1</sup> This comment is no less true for missionary history. Eugene Stock, who wrote the standard history of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, chose as the full title for his four volume work, *The History of the Church Missionary Society; its environment, its men and its work* (underlining added). Whilst it may be argued that 'men' can be interpreted in a general way as to somehow include women, a sort of shorthand for mankind, and Stock is very sympathetic to the women who served the CMS, it also reflects the overall masculine predominance in history about which Virginia Woolf complained. Mina Gollock, who worked for the CMS at the beginning of the 20th century, pointed out in an article in 1912 that women did most of the work in the mission societies, particularly fund-raising.<sup>2</sup> She was concerned also about the women being denied a presence on the missionary boards although they were serving on Royal Commissions and University Senates.

The importance of women's history has been increasingly recognised since at least the 1970s so that history is now matched by 'herstory'.<sup>3</sup> The missionary archives provide a rich source of material for this type of research as many others have already recognised. Jane Haggis (1991) has written about female missionaries in South India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Rhonda Semple's thesis (2002) explores how women brought specific skills to missions and how they expanded the notion of what constituted valid missionary work for them.<sup>5</sup> Gulnar Francis-Dehqani has looked at the work of female

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. Gollock, 'The Share of Women in the Administration of Missions', *International Review of Missions*, (1912), 674-687, (p. 678).

<sup>3</sup> Jean Holm with John Bowker, *Women in Religion* (London: Pinter Publishers 1994), p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Haggis, 'Professional Ladies and Working Wives: Female Missionaries in the London Missionary Society and its South Travancore District, South India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Rhonda A. Semple, 'Ladies of Much Ability and Intelligence' Gender Relations in British Protestant



CMS missionaries in Iran, 1869-1934.<sup>6</sup> A seminal work in this area and one of the earliest is R. Pierce Beaver's work, *All Loves Excelling*.<sup>7</sup> J. Hunter has looked at the work of American women missionaries in China at the turn of the Century.<sup>8</sup> P. Hill has traced the growth of the American women's foreign missionary movement.<sup>9</sup> M. Malmgreen's work on religion in the lives of English women looks more generally at women and religion but includes contributions on the work of Methodist deaconesses who served overseas including West Africa.<sup>10</sup> *Women and Missions: Past and Present*, edited by F. Bowie, D. Kirkwood and S. Ardener, contains a collection of papers which are particularly relevant to this thesis.<sup>11</sup> Jocelyn Murray has written about the role of women in the CMS 1799-1917 in a chapter of a book published to mark the bicentenary of the Society.<sup>12</sup> Rosemary Hackett has written about women missionaries in Old Calabar.<sup>13</sup> Taken together the works cited above provide a substantial and informative base which underpins the research carried out for this thesis.

This thesis attempts to provide a further contribution on the role of women (both European and West African) in missionary work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (in fact from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the end of W.W.I.) in British West Africa, namely the territories that were to become the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Of the 29 Protestant societies working there in 1915, five have been looked at in detail, that is the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the Basel Mission Society, the United Presbyterian

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Missions 1865-1910' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Gulnar Eleanor Francis-Dehqani, *Religious Feminism in an Age of Empire: CMS Missionaries in Iran, 1869-1934* (CCSRG Monograph 4: University of Bristol 2000).

<sup>7</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, *All Loves Excelling* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility - American Women Missionaries in Turn of the Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985)

<sup>10</sup> Gail Malmgreen, ed., *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener, eds, *Women and Missions: Past and Present: anthropological and historical perceptions* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Jocelyn Murray, 'The Role of Women in the CMS 1799-1917', in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity 1799-1999*, ed. by Kevin Ward & Brian Stanley (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 67-88.

<sup>13</sup> Rosalind Hackett, 'Beyond Afternoon Tea: Images and Roles of Missionary Women in Old Calabar', in *Women Missionaries and Cultural Change* ed. by Philip Kulp (Williamsburg Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary, 1987), pp. 47-54.

Church of Scotland Mission and the Qua Iboe Mission Society. In themselves they provide a wide geographical spread within Great Britain and the Basel Mission Society, as a Swiss based but German dominated organisation, provides a further contrast, albeit that these societies shared a common adherence to the evangelical tradition. In Appendix I there is an outline of the history of the missionary societies involved in British West Africa in the 19th century.

To gain the experience of women themselves it is necessary to recover not only their own voice but also their perceptions of their own lives.<sup>14</sup> It is also necessary to see the contribution which women made to the development of missions either as helpmeets or single female missionaries. If there are problems in finding 'the right sort' of information about missionary women, the problem is that much greater for the indigenous women whom they came to convert. Records relating to non literate minorities were often thought unimportant and lost. Historians need to devise ways to cope with this if a comprehensive history of women's involvement in missions is to be achieved. Oral history is a part of this process and my visit to Ghana provided some opportunities for this and gave interesting leads. There is increasing emphasis in West Africa on the history of local women, for example at the newly established Institute for Women and Religion at Legon, Accra. Relationships between African and female missionaries also need to be explored. Were the latter maternal imperialists, feminist allies or cultural missionaries?<sup>15</sup> Women's mission to the poor and 'unsaved', imbued by a religious conscience, was accepted but it would not be appropriate to try to write a revisionist history of 19<sup>th</sup> century missions in West Africa, placing women at the centre of missionary activity, even though missionary work helped to extend the philanthropic efforts of women on a world-wide basis. However, it is the intention to show that women, whether European or West African, were an important and understated factor in missionary work, that without their contribution the work would have been less effective and that initiatives by women

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<sup>14</sup> Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson & Jane Rendall, eds *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (London: MacMillan, 1991), p. xxxi.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13:4 (1990), 309-321.

played an important role. The intention is not be condemnatory but to be critical. Historical relativism is never uniform nor absolute but in order to avoid passing judgement altogether is to become an unwitting apologist.<sup>16</sup> The powerful religious drive of the 19<sup>th</sup> missionaries, that desire to save the unconverted, sometimes led them to commit what would be seen today as excesses and to seem unsympathetic to those whose souls they came to save.

Some energetic women found an outlet for their energies in serving the missionary cause. West Africa produced both Hannah Kilham and Mary Slessor in the same century. They have both been the subject of considerable research. How far they provided role models for other women is difficult to say since both were essentially forceful individuals and it was said that one Mary Slessor was enough for any mission. Few could hope to emulate them but the role of ‘women worthies’ was seen as praiseworthy by contemporaries. Clara Balfour wrote a book called *Women Worth Emulating* in 1877.<sup>17</sup> This set out the achievements of a small number of women (but no missionaries) who were seen as outstanding and was intended to encourage others to try to reach the same Olympian heights. In looking at the achievements of the women who acquire fame, the achievements of those whose flame burns lower can be overlooked. The emphasis in this thesis is on the more ordinary women who were involved with the missions in West Africa.

Overseas missionaries, however important they seemed to their participants, were only a small part of Victorian society. But they grew steadily in numbers, especially the women among them, and they both influenced and were influenced by that wider society. In 1799 there were 150 and in 1897 nearly 11,000 missionaries of whom nearly 4,000 were single female missionaries.(see below section IV) They were part of Britain’s empire, in West Africa at least, and were firmly rooted in society at home so some assessment of their place within the overall historical context seems necessary, however brief (see below section VI).

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<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 182.

<sup>17</sup> Clara Lucas Balfour, *Women Worth Emulating* (London: Sunday School Union, 1877).

The thesis is divided into seven chapters plus a bibliography and various appendices.

The chapters are:

### Chapter I Introduction

This contains a general section setting out the parameters of the research, the reasons for it and how it follows on from other research in the same area. Also as part of an attempt to present the wider context, there is brief discussion of empire and missionaries and also of 'the women question' and the relevance to it of missionary women. The research methodology used is also discussed. The chapter also looks at missionary numbers, particularly the growing proportion of women, the attitude of Queen Victoria, as the leading woman of her age, towards West African missionaries, and also Catholic missions, particularly nuns, active in British West Africa.

### Chapter II Women's Missionary Work at Home

The sending of agents overseas implied the need of considerable means at home both to provide the necessary resources, particularly finance, and the need to stimulate interest in a missionary career and to provide training. This chapter looks at the organisation of one particular part of the WMMS, the Women's Auxiliary, which was a stand alone organisation, raising its own funds and sending single female missionaries abroad. The training of single women by the CMS and the Women's Auxiliary is also looked at.

### Chapter III Women's Work in the West African Missionary Field

This chapter traces the history of what work women, whether as wives, widows or single female missionaries, attempted in West Africa. It includes sections on Anna Hinderer, Hannah Kilham and Mary Slessor whilst concentrating on the work of the many other lesser known women who went to West Africa. This chapter is the core of the thesis and could have been considerably expanded. However, the role of women in overseas missionary work needs to be looked at in the overall context of missionary activity so room has had to be made for that.

#### Chapter IV The Annie Walsh Memorial School, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Female missionaries, African girls and women all came together at the Annie Walsh school, the first secondary school in West Africa for girls. The history of the school shows not only how education for girls developed but also the role of African women teachers. Perhaps more importantly it shows how female missionaries and Africans related, particularly in the controlling committee, the Annie Walsh Visiting Committee, which for some time had women members only.

#### Chapter V The Myth of the Missionary Heroine

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the missionary societies were concerned to depict their female agents as heroines, partly in an attempt to explain how they could undertake tasks which at home were not seen as suitable and partly to explain their often early deaths in an acceptable way. This chapter analyses this approach and contrasts it with the depiction of missionary women in selected 19<sup>th</sup> fiction. The comparison provides an alternative view to that of the missionary societies.

#### Chapter VI Missionary Encounters with African Women

Missionaries saw West African women as an important part of the conversion process. Christian women were needed as wives and mothers so that their influence spread widely. Missionary attitudes on domestic slavery and polygyny were important since they affected women more severely than men. The relationship with missionaries was not all one-sided and West African women were sometimes able to manipulate the missionaries. The chapter traces these processes.

#### Chapter VII Conclusions

The main conclusion of the research is that women were central to the work of the missionary societies as it developed in West Africa. They took on new responsibilities showing what women could do given the opportunity. They were much closer to the reality of the lives of African women and were often the instigator of changes in customs affecting them. Women's contribution was reflected in the growing numbers of women recruited by the societies at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

## II Methodology

Much of the work has been based on the archives of the various missionary societies. The bibliography gives further details. The archives of the CMS and the WMMS are readily available to researchers and have been used by many. These include the missionary magazines published by the various societies. However there has been little work on the archives of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS nor have the archives in general been used to look at the work of women in West Africa. Much of the existing work on missionary women has been on India and China where the missionary societies concentrated their resources. Most of the information on women is contained within the more general files and it has been necessary to comb through the archives to find the necessary information.

The Qua Iboe Missionary Society was small compared with the other four missionary societies in West Africa which were researched. Its records are now in the Northern Ireland Public Record Office and provided an opportunity for research into a society with very limited resources and which appears not to have been the subject of previous research. The Basel Mission Society was one of the most important in the Gold Coast. Its records are mostly in German, although the letters from the African pastors are in English (a dubious methodology to rely on these alone), but a considerable amount of work has been done on the archives which has been published in English. The research on the Basel Mission was also supplemented by using records in English in the Public Records Office in Accra plus the translation of some letters.

African newspapers of the period also provided some information although for the most part the runs were incomplete. In general these provided an alternative viewpoint from that of the missionary societies. This was mostly the experience too with the novels used in Chapter V on the depiction of missionary women in 19th century fiction.

## III Catholic Missions

The Sisters of Cluny, the first Catholic sisters to arrive in British West Africa, came to the Gambia in 1823 at the request of the then governor, Sir Charles McCarthy to reorganise the hospital at the capital, Bathurst.<sup>18</sup> They were already in the area adjacent to the Gambia. They, that is the foundress of the sisters of Cluny, Mother Anne-Marie Javouhey, one other sister and an African girl called Florence, then went to Freetown, Sierra Leone where they were similarly involved with a hospital for liberated Africans. They left in 1824 due to illness and this ended the Catholic connection until the Holy Ghost Fathers arrived in 1864 to be joined in 1866 by three sisters from the Order of the Sisters of Cluny, two of whom died in 1872.<sup>19</sup> The Society for African Missions (SMA) started work in the Gold Coast at Elmina in 1880. In 1883 two sisters from the Order of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) opened a girls' school there. The OLA had been started in 1876 by the founder of the SMA, Father Planque. Their role was to develop Christian families who would later form the nucleus of congregations.<sup>20</sup> In 1890 they opened a further girls' school at neighbouring Cape Coast Castle.<sup>21</sup> This had 150 pupils and provided religious instruction, reading, writing, sewing and housecraft.<sup>22</sup> The sisters were teachers during the day and 'medical and social workers and catechists during the evenings'.<sup>23</sup>

The SMA sent its first missionary to Lagos in 1868 with an outpost opened near Badgary in 1896. In 1892 a convent school for girls was established in Lagos. In 1889 the mission was extended to Abeokuta and in 1895 to Ibadan. The SMA fathers were assisted by the Franciscan Sisters of the Propagation of the Faith based in Lyons, France. By 1864 there were six sisters involved in educational and medical work. Sisters from the Order of St. Joseph of Cluny arrived in Onitsha in 1889. They were teaching and nursing sisters and established the Onitsha convent school. This closed in 1908 and the sisters were sent to Calabar. Four sisters had been sent there in 1904

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<sup>18</sup> Martin James Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1956), p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> Lamin O. Sanneh, *West African Christianity* (London: Hurst, 1983), p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Rosemary Akurign, 'Women in the Catholic Church in Ghana' (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Ghana, 1998), pp. 56-7.

<sup>21</sup> J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 105-6.

<sup>22</sup> Helene M. Pfann, *A Short History of the Catholic Church in Ghana* (Cape Coast: Mission Press, 1970), p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Catholic Voice* October 1983 p. 13, quoted by Akurign above p. 76.



to work in a hospital and start a primary school which by 1905 had 112 girls.<sup>24</sup> In 1912 the OLA sisters opened a convent school for girls at Idikan.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the Catholic sisters involved in British West Africa were nameless and faceless, except for Mother Anne-Marie Javouhey, foundress of the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. A photograph of her is included in Appendix VI, Figure 1. King Louis-Philippe of France commented in 1833 'She is a great man'.<sup>26</sup> Napoleon is alleged to have said that he would have made her a general. It has been suggested that she broke the stereotypes that strenuous pioneering missionary work is only for men and that women cannot excel in the so-called traditional male occupation of agriculture, building and administration.<sup>27</sup> Her energetic and pioneering work bear comparisons with that of Hannah Kilham (see Chapter III) who worked in Sierra Leone at roughly the same time, starting schools and pioneering new educational methods.

In his 1887 report the Inspector of Schools in British West Africa paid the following tribute to the work of the OLA sisters. 'It is a remarkably striking factor, that of the four English colonies of the Western Coast of Africa, in three colonies the schools kept by the Catholic nuns take the first rank. They are those of Sierra Leone, Lagos and Gambia. In the Gold Coast, the Nuns' school established comparatively recently, has taken a high place, though not the first place. In all these schools, the sole merit of success is due to the sisters.'<sup>28</sup> The Sisters provided a considerable number of school places for girls, although none were apparently at secondary level. The Sisters were unpaid and no school fees were charged. Monsignor Shanahan, who was the Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria in 1915, believed that the sisters '...would be giving mainly catechical instruction to children, preparing them for the sacraments; visiting the sick; teaching in the elementary schools, taking charge of sodalities

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<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka, *The School in the Service of Evangelisation: The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria 1889-1950* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), pp. 206-8.

<sup>25</sup> Peter B. Clarke, *West African Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Grey, 'Missiology from a Christian Feminist Perspective', *International Review of Missions*, 81:332 (1992), 201-11 (p. 201).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 207).

<sup>28</sup> Martin James Bane, *op. cit.*, p. 181.



[church societies] and looking after the church. Sisters trained in hospital work would be invaluable.’<sup>29</sup>

There were few colonial officials who were Catholic. Sir John Pope Hennessy, ‘Irish Romanist’, Governor-in-Chief West African Settlements, in 1872 upset the CMS, not by his support for Catholic missions but for his support of Islam, particularly the establishment of Islamic schools.<sup>30</sup> Sir James Marshall, appointed Chief Justice for the Gold Coast in 1880, appealed in the Catholic paper, *The Tablet*, for Catholic missionaries for West Africa but otherwise does not seem to have involved himself with missions. He died in 1889 and his widow, described as belonging to an old Lancashire Catholic family, took up the missionary cause, writing in various Catholic journals, publishing letters from missionaries and organising the collection and dispatch of financial and material assistance.<sup>31</sup>

Adrian Hastings has suggested that widespread female participation was one of the novelties of the Protestant movement and almost absent among the Catholic missions.<sup>32</sup> The Catholic sisters who came to West Africa had to combine the role of missionary wife and the single female missionary found in the Protestant missions. The Catholic mission societies were sending out single women much earlier than their Protestant counterparts where single female missionaries were unusual before the last two decades of the 19th century. The sisters provided educational and medical services, accepted functions for women serving in missions. The sisters also came to proselytise the idea of the Christian family. Their task was made more difficult since both they and the Catholic fathers were unmarried. The education which the sisters provided was admired but it did not go beyond the primary level. Whether the sisters were incapable of providing secondary education because of their own background or whether there was a deliberate decision to restrict the education given to girls is not known. With an energetic and forceful head, such as Mother Javouhey, the Sisters of

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<sup>29</sup> Colman Cooke, *Mary Charles Walker, the Nun of Calabar* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1980), p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS 1899 & 1915), II p. 449.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund M. Hogan, ‘Sir James Marshall and Catholic Missions to West Africa 1837-1889’, *Catholic Historical Review*, 76 (1990), 212-234 (p.233).

<sup>32</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 264.

Cluny, were able to decide on their own agenda with certain constraints. Mother Javouhey, for example, was able to defy the efforts of the Bishop of Autun to control her order. Strong-minded women like her and others such as Hannah Kilham and Mary Slessor and also Mrs. Wiseman of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS (see Chapter II) were attracted to the missionary cause which gave them scope for their ability and energy. Mostly however the Catholic sisters were subject to the control of their masculine fellow workers and there was little opportunity for any individuality.

#### IV Missionary Numbers

A great deal of information was produced on the numbers of missionaries in the last decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Dr. Dennis's *Christian Missions and Social Progress*, published in 1897, contained tables showing the number of foreign missionaries, subdivided into ordained missionaries, physicians, other lay missionaries, married women (i.e. wives) and unmarried women.<sup>33</sup> Jane Haggis has argued that this shows that the number of women missionaries (8,000) exceeded that of ordained male missionaries (6,000) but this is a valid argument only if male lay missionaries are excluded (3,500).<sup>34</sup> Part of the purpose of such earlier publications was to show the efforts which had been put into the missionary cause and hence to raise the public's consciousness of the activities of missionary societies. For the most part such publications included Protestant missionaries only. One of the features which contemporary commentators noted was the increase in the number of women in the service of the societies, both wives and single women. The article in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* noted that '...the aggregate of women in the [Protestant] missions is greater than the aggregate of men.'<sup>35</sup> Dr. Dennis's second publication, *Centennial Survey of Foreign Missions*, published in 1902 and compiled from returns from the various Protestant missionary societies, showed the total for men working for them was almost 10,000 (including 3,500 lay

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<sup>33</sup> James Shephard Dennis, *Christian Missions and Social Progress* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1897).

<sup>34</sup> Jane Haggis, 'Professional Ladies and Working Wives: Female Missionaries in the London Missionary Society and its South Travancore District, South India in the 19th century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 11th Edition Vol. 18 1913 p. 588.

men) and 8,000 women ( including 4,300 wives).<sup>36</sup> Niall Ferguson suggests that by the end of the 19th century there were 12,000 British missionaries but does not give any sources for this figure.<sup>37</sup> Jane Haggis has suggested that the increase in the number of women is part of the feminisation of the missionary labour force, a process mirrored in British society as a whole as middle class women entered paid employment for the first time.<sup>38</sup>

Figures for 1884-5, given in the Church Missionary Atlas of 1896 and quoting figures from the *Missionary Review of the World*, show that of a total of about 12,000 missionaries, 5,500 were men and just over 6,000 women. There are discrepancies in the various statistics but it is clear that from the 1890s onwards the number of women serving the missionary societies exceeded that of men. A major reason for this was most missionaries were married and their wives were included. They were an essential part of the missionising process as will be argued in Chapter III but they would have been seen by colleagues in a different light from the single female missionary. In talking about the feminisation of the missions it has to be borne in mind that the missionary societies were mostly, although not exclusively, controlled by men and the local groups in overseas countries that oversaw the day-to-day activities of the missionaries were exclusively male. One definition of feminism is 'the doctrine of equal rights for women, based on the equality of sexes' which was not the case for the missions.<sup>39</sup>

The CM *Gleaner* of October 1899 gave figures for Protestant missionaries, rising from 150 in 1799 (all men) to 10,558 in 1897 (6,576 men and 3,982 unmarried women). Perhaps the most striking statistic is the doubling of the number of unmarried women missionaries between 1889 and 1897 whilst the number of male

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<sup>36</sup> James Shephard Dennis, *Centennial Survey of Foreign Missions* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1902), p. 264.

<sup>37</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> Jane Haggis, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>39</sup> Brian Healy, 'The Beginnings of Church Feminism: Women and the Councils of the Church of England, 1897-1919', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1769-1930* 1986, ed. by Gail Malmgreen (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp.260-280 (p. 260).

missionaries increased by 50%. Andrew Porter also gives a figure of 10,000.<sup>40</sup> Part of the difference between this number and the higher numbers given by Dr. Dennis is that the figures used in the *Gleaner* and by Andrew Porter do not include wives. The growing number of women involved in philanthropic work is also reflected in other areas, for example in the anti-slavery campaign where Claire Midgley has shown how the number of ladies' anti-slavery associations grew and also women's involvement in petitions against slavery.<sup>41</sup>

The Protestant missionaries were spread throughout the non-European world. The numbers in West Africa were very small and became increasingly so as missionaries were replaced by local ministers. In Sierra Leone in 1894 the CMS had four European missionaries, two wives and five European women and in the Niger Mission eight European men, five women and apparently no wives although this is almost certainly an error. These figures show that even by 1894 in West Africa women missionaries, including wives, exceeded the number of male missionaries.

None of the figures quoted have included Catholic missionaries. Partly this is because the compilers, mostly from those associated with the Protestant missionary societies, had either not been able to obtain the information or did not consider Catholic missionaries to be on the same level as Protestant missionaries. An additional complication is that any Catholic numbers usually include those sent to Protestant European countries which would not be acknowledged by Protestants as missionaries in the usually accepted sense. However, an attempt has been made to compile numbers of Catholic missionaries to give an overall picture. The Catholic missionaries were late starters in the 19th century, including in West Africa but they were a significant presence in some areas. Many were French and would have gone to French speaking parts of the world. One estimate mostly taken from the *Atlas Hierarchichus*, issued in 1913, shows world-wide roughly equal numbers of priests and lay brothers (nearly 9,000) and sisters (8,500).<sup>42</sup> In contrast the *Encyclopaedia of*

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<sup>40</sup> Andrew Porter, 'Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm and Empire', in the *Oxford History of the British Empire - The Nineteenth Century* ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford: OUP, 1999) III (pp. 222-246) p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 67 and 206/7.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Henry Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), p. 492.

*Missions* (1904) gives far higher figures although there is a caveat that such numbers are difficult to estimate. The figures suggested are 15, 000 priests, 5,000 teaching brothers and an amazing 45,000 sisters (as at 1st January 1903).<sup>43</sup> However these figures include those working in Europe. The Protestant missionaries did have workers in Catholic European countries but their numbers were extremely low.

There are a number of sources for figures of Protestant missionaries world-wide and they seem to be roughly consistent with any major differences explained by not counting wives. Figures for Catholic missionaries are more problematical. The very large numbers quoted in the *Encyclopaedia of Missions* can probably be disregarded. This leaves just one estimate (from the *Atlas Hierarchichus*) so no comparisons with other sources are possible. If this estimate is accepted then the total number of missionaries active world-wide around the turn of the century was:

	Men	Women	Total	Date
Protestant (Dennis figures)	9,994	7,980	17,974	1899
Catholic (Atlas Hierarchichus)	<u>8,577</u>	<u>8,512</u>	<u>17,089</u>	1913
Total	<u>18,571</u>	<u>16,492</u>	<u>35,063</u>	

Such figures need to be treated with caution, not least because of the different dates. They do, however, indicate that there were considerably more missionaries than has been realised. Figures for Protestant missionaries were not available for 1913 but they would have been even higher than the 1899 figures, especially for women.

V British Expansion in West Africa in the Nineteenth Century

To provide the context in which the missionary societies worked in West Africa, a short account of Britain’s expanding empire there is useful. Britain’s interest in the West Coast of Africa was originally because of the need to enforce the abolition of the slave trade. Sierra Leone became the base for this after legislation was passed in 1807

<sup>43</sup> H. O. Dwight, A. Tupper & E. M. Bliss, eds, *The Encyclopaedia of Missions* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), Appendix VI.

on ending the trade. It also became the home for the slaves taken from ships by the British navy, the recaptives or liberated Africans as they became known. The Jamaican Maroons were also sent there and it also became the home for those freed American slaves who had fought for Britain in the American War of Independence and had initially been settled in Nova Scotia. Sierra Leone was explicitly Christian. By 1870 the divisions into settlers, recaptives and Creoles had become blurred and the name 'Creole' was applied to all citizens of the colony. Initially based in the capital, Freetown, Britain found it increasingly necessary to enter into treaties with rulers further inland to prevent the slave trade. Trade provided another incentive to expansion of British rule as more of West Africa came under British influence. It was not until after 1880 that there was any dramatic change when French expansion in West Africa seemingly posed a threat to Britain's presence in Sierra Leone. Steps were taken to agree the boundary and in 1896 the Protectorate of Sierra Leone was established with British rule consolidated in 1898 after the 'Hut Tax Uprising'. The boundary with Liberia was not settled until 1912. Freetown was important as the only coaling station on the West African coast under British jurisdiction. The rapid growth of the church in Sierra Leone was seen as a success story. It has, however, been pointed out that the circumstances there were exceptional in so far as there was a population without any fixed roots and it was not surprising that they responded enthusiastically to the call to Christianity.<sup>44</sup>

Until 1821 the rights of government in Gambia were vested in a Committee of Merchants but an 1821 Act of Parliament transferred these rights to the British government. The main interest of Britain was trade but eliminating the slave trade was also a problem. Until 1843 Sierra Leone and the Gambia were administered as one. The second half of the 19th century in the Gambia was marked with extensive local conflicts and also natural disasters such as drought. For much of the time there were considerable discussions with France about exchanging the Gambia for French territory although these proposals were criticised by trading interests in Britain and came to nothing. Missionaries were also important in thwarting the Gambia

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<sup>44</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag - Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 162.

exchange. A Convention signed in 1889 did much to regularise the occupation of the coast and lay the basis for an agreement on the boundaries on the rest of the Gambia.

British involvement in what were to become the Gold Coast and Nigeria was even slower to develop than in Sierra Leone and the Gambia. The Gold Coast was characterised in the 19th century by a series of wars but with long periods of peace between the Asante people and their neighbours. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century the Asante had conquered their relatively small rivals, the Fante, who controlled access to the European forts on the coast. Between 1824 and 1873 the British went to war with the Asante a number of times to ensure that they did not control the entire coastline. Britain had withdrawn from the area between 1828 and 1842 because of the cost of the Asante wars and the area was administered by merchants in the area. They appointed George Maclean governor in 1829 and he promoted trade and encouraged missionary activity. The Asante were defeated in 1874, although their country was not annexed until 1900.

Exploration of the River Niger dates from the founding of the African Association in 1788. Its specific objective was the exploration of the interior of Africa. Expeditions took place in the 1820s and 1830s culminating in the Niger Expedition of 1841. In 1849 Britain appointed a consul for the Bight of Benin and Biafra, laying the foundations for British rule in the area. In 1853 a full-time consul was appointed for Lagos in view of its importance for trade with the interior. In 1861 Lagos was ceded to Britain and a Governor appointed who subsequently became involved with disputes in Yorubaland. In 1885 it was clear that these disputes needed to be ended if Lagos was to survive as it was dependent on trade from the interior. In 1886 the Royal Niger Company was granted a royal charter which was withdrawn at the end of 1899 and direct rule imposed. Thereafter there was a steady consolidation of British rule over the area with the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria created in 1900 only to be merged in 1914.

#### V1 Missions in the Context of Empire, especially West Africa



There is general agreement that the boundaries of formal empire rarely coincided with the activities of British missionaries and that the link between empire and missions is not a straightforward one.<sup>45</sup> Etherington has further suggested that when missionaries followed the flag, it was often not their own.<sup>46</sup> Countries like China and Persia always remained outside of any formal empire yet missionary societies were active there. The contrary view is taken by Ajayi that in Nigeria 'Secure behind the British imperial lion, the Christian missions were ready for the great expansion'.<sup>47</sup> He has also suggested that the annexation of Lagos in 1861 was the culmination of the joint effort of mission and empire.<sup>48</sup> Supporting Ajayi's comment, it has been suggested that the missionaries played a direct and important part in the British acquisition of Yorubaland, Nyasaland and Uganda and were also responsible for British expansion in other parts of Africa.<sup>49</sup> By the 1890s Protestant missionaries, it seems, supported colonial rule.<sup>50</sup>

The Basel Mission felt that it had been successful in its efforts to prevent Britain withdrawing from West Africa when the question was considered by a select committee in 1865.<sup>51</sup> Eldridge has further suggested that the expansion of Britain's empire in the 1870s occurred partly at the behest of missionaries, although accepting that merchants and men on the spot had at least equal influence.<sup>52</sup> If missionaries occasionally claimed that religion '...attach the governors to the governed', Hyam believes that this has to be seen as an attempt by missions to persuade government that they could be useful.<sup>53</sup> Robinson and Gallagher have argued that imperial (and

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<sup>45</sup> Peter James Marshall, 'Imperial Britain', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 23:3 (1995), 379-394 (p. 381).

<sup>46</sup> Norman Etherington, 'Missions and Empire', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. V ed. by Robin W. Winks (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp. 303-314 (p. 303).

<sup>47</sup> J. F. Ade Ajayi, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1965), p. 234.

<sup>48</sup> Jacob F. Ade Ajayi, *Henry Martyn Lecture II: Crowther and Language in the Yoruba Mission* 1999 p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis Henry Gann & Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 123.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Neil Porter, 'Cambridge, Keswick and Late Nineteenth-Century Attitudes to Africa', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 5:1 (1976), 5-34 (p. 6).

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Charles Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 300.

<sup>52</sup> C. C. Eldridge, *England's Mission: The Imperial Idea in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli 1868-1880* (London: MacMillan, 1973), p. 144.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: MacMillan, 1993), p. 96.



therefore by analogy missionary) 'Expansion .... seemed not only natural and necessary but inevitable. It was the spontaneous expression of an inherently dynamic society.'<sup>54</sup> According to Hastings, spiritual enthusiasm for expansion reflected the growing confidence in Britain in its role in world hegemony.<sup>55</sup> Stanley argues that missionaries were not imperialists in the ordinary sense of the word because their motives were entirely different.<sup>56</sup> The missionary task was to promote an ecclesiastical empire that would survive when the British Empire was dead.

Much of the Victorian thinking about Africa centred on a belief that Britain had a guilt to expiate, that is to provide some recompense for slavery.<sup>57</sup> The humanitarian influence was important and the report of Fowell Buxton's Select Committee on Aborigines (1837) concluded '...that in future Britain's main concern should be to carry civilisation and humanity, peace and government and above all the knowledge of the true God to the uttermost ends of the earth.'<sup>58</sup> This was a pious hope propounded by one of the century's great humanitarians. The perceived failure of the Niger Expedition 1841-42, inspired by Buxton, and the reform of the movement against slavery in 1839 contributed to the decline in the humanitarian influence in the 1840s.

The decline is also evident in the hardening of racial attitudes in the 1860s. The Indian Mutiny and the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica in 1865 were contributory factors as were scientific and pseudo scientific writings about race. Missionaries' letters, used as a means of propaganda and fund-raising, stressed the wickedness of the non-Christian people they came to convert. It has been argued that the letters, because they were widely read in Britain, contributed to the decline in racial attitudes.<sup>59</sup> If so, they played a very small part since missionaries had been writing in

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<sup>54</sup> Ronald Robinson & John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* 2nd edn (London: MacMillan, 1981), p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 245.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Cox, 'The Missionary Movement', in *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions: Retrospect and Prospect* ed. by D. G. Paz (London: Greenwood, 1995), pp. 197-220 (p. 201).

<sup>57</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: MacMillan, 1993), p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 83.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 159.

a similar vein since they had first gone overseas at the end of the 18th century. Few would agree with the view that missionaries appear to have been largely indifferent to theories of inherent physical differences based on race as argued by Cox.<sup>60</sup>

Explorers cum missionaries, like David Livingstone in the mid 19th century, aroused interest in the more remote parts of the globe. Women like Mary Slessor also created an interest in West Africa which was wider than just missionary circles. Efforts such as these, seen almost as superhuman, a combination of daring and duty, contributed to a greater awareness of the world overseas, particularly Africa, and helped to promote the idea at home of how much Britain's civilising influence was needed. Women had a special role to play in this civilising mission. As missionaries, moreover, they could claim that religion justified imperialism.

Yet the civilising mission was one of many motives behind the expansion of the Empire. There was also the economic motive, the desire for security, the search for glory and nationalism.<sup>61</sup> With growing competition from the United States, Germany and France in the 1880s troubling British expansion, the situation changed and 'the official mind made its decisions in the light of what *it* assessed were the needs of British commerce'.<sup>62</sup> Thus as the number of missionaries, both men and women, increased, empire became more concerned with commerce and gave the missionary societies even more justification for sending out their workers in greater numbers.

## VII 'The Woman Question'

How middle-class women should be regarded was a burning question for the Victorians. Should they be allowed to own property or to vote, for example. Above all should they be allowed to undertake paid work outside the home. Some of these issues were resolved during the 19th whilst others had to wait until the following century. Missionary work by women was relevant to this debate. Four myths about

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<sup>60</sup> Jeffrey Cox, 'The Missionary Movement', in *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by D. G. Paz (London: Greenwood, 1995), pp. 197-220 (p. 216).

<sup>61</sup> Lewis Henry Gann & Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> J. Flint, *Perspectives of Empire* (London, 1973) p. 95 Quoted in *The Rulers of British Africa* ed. by Lewis Henry Gann & Peter Duignan, (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 20.

the role for women were especially relevant.<sup>63</sup> There was the Angel in the House model where woman's nature was seen as loving and self-sacrificing and her responsibilities domestic and maternal. Then there was the model of complete equality where women were seen as equal contracting partners with men. This role was radical and at odds with the widespread interest in woman's special nature. Few Victorians countenanced this role. There was the Angel out of the House. She ministered to the world through philanthropy and social service. Florence Nightingale, it is suggested, was the incarnation of this freed Angel. Finally there was the radical version of the angelic ideal. This combined a belief in woman's distinctive nature, that is a female saviour leading the way to a fuller humanity. This role, it is suggested, helped to fuel such campaigns as those against the Contagious Diseases Acts and to promote temperance and social reform.

The 'woman question' was re-examined in the light of evolutionary theory. In the late 19th century Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson argued that women were guardians of social progress with particular responsibility to create homes and breed children.<sup>64</sup> They saw the low birth rate, high infant mortality and possibly the poor physical specimens in adulthood as testimony that women were shirking their responsibilities - all too often for wages or an emancipation which threatened 'social efficiency'. Eugenacists saw motherhood as an entirely fulfilling role for women.<sup>65</sup> Herbert Spencer, 'a supreme ideologue of the Victorian period', suggested that the difference between a primitive and civilized society was whether women did physical work.<sup>66</sup> This may account for part of the missionaries' antipathy towards trading by West African women (see Chapter VI).

The arts, drawing, piano playing and French were the staple teaching for middle-class girls and these accomplishments were paraded as being the opposite of business

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<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets & William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Literary Issues, 1837-1883* (London: Garland Publishing, 1983), p. xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *Growing Up in Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 94.

<sup>65</sup> Lorna Duffin, 'Prisoners of Education: Women and Evolution', in *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World* ed. by Sara Delamont & Lorna Duffin, (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 57-91 (p. 78).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 61).

duties.<sup>67</sup> Not all girls received this limited type of education, for example Annie Walsh (see Chapter IV) who learnt Latin and Greek from her vicar father, whilst in the second half of the 19th century girls' boarding schools such as Cheltenham Ladies College were set up and aspired to more than a conventional education for girls. Nevertheless from 1862 needlework became a compulsory part of a girls' education and domestic economy from 1879. Such education reinforced the status quo for women in society. The idea that better education made better mothers was ignored. The prevailing Victorian belief was that women were the inferior sex in intellect and the purpose of education was to fit them for marriage and the home.

Missionary women did not fit easily into the scenario outlined above. They were not generally radicals. Hannah Kilham, who combined anti-slavery, missionary and charitable commitments (see Chapter III) is perhaps the nearest to a radical that the missionary movement produced. Mrs. Wiseman of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS (see Chapter II) was one of the first women to sit on the newly established school boards in 1870 but she could not be described as a radical. Missionary women were overseas for long periods and had little opportunity to foster any interest they might have in contributing to 'the woman question'. For the most part they went overseas as teachers, healers or wives which limited their activities. Yet, it has been argued, that they introduced new concepts which struck at the hearts of the cultures they encountered.<sup>68</sup> Andrew Porter has argued that the work of female European missionaries was 'seriously subversive of metropolitan norms and thus inhibited cultural imperialism.' He argues that the extent of female responsibility and the demonstration of practical co-operation with men offered a range of examples to indigenous women.<sup>69</sup> This is an interesting argument although few African women could hope to achieve the independence of action which female missionaries seemingly enjoyed.

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<sup>67</sup> Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), p. 289.

<sup>68</sup> Shirley S. Garrett, 'Sisters All: Feminisation and the American women's missionary movement', in *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920* ed. by Torben Christensen & William R. Hutchison, (Aarhus: Aros, 1982), pp. 221-230 (p. 224).

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Neil Porter, *Cultural Imperialism and Missionary Enterprise* (University of Cambridge North Atlantic Missiology Project: Position Paper No. 7, nd), p. 21.

Those campaigning for greater freedom for women may have been interested in women missionaries but not vice versa. Many women missionaries were strong-minded but they were used to being excluded from both church and missionary affairs and accepted this as part of the price to be paid for participating in the work of saving souls. The missionary societies provided outlets for some of those professionally qualified women who were being grudgingly accepted at home. The CMS, for example, employed 86 doctors in its medical missions in 1915 of whom 21 were women.<sup>70</sup> This was paid employment which Elizabeth Garret Anderson suggested was essential to solve 'the woman question', although missionary women doctors had to resign on marriage. Female missionaries made an unconscious contribution to 'the woman question'. They had to fight to be accepted in their own right as missionaries rather than as wives only. However overseas and out of sight for most of the time with their only public utterances made through the missionary journals, theirs was a muted contribution which was hardly acknowledged.

#### VIII Queen Victoria and West African Missions

As the leading woman of her day the Queen exercised a powerful influence over society. The office of patron of the CMS was reserved for a member of the Royal Family and the society would have benefited considerably from her patronage. The Queen, however, never felt able to accept the position and it was never filled. As head of the Church of England, she had to remain above the various factions within it and could not be seen to favour the evangelical CMS. She was brought up as an evangelical but never described herself as such when Queen. 'To do so in the violently partisan religious climate which existed through most of her reign would have been the height of folly.'<sup>71</sup> She was a life governor as a result of a contribution of £100 which she and Prince Albert donated to the CMS Jubilee Fund of 1849. The CMS was particularly gratified by this contribution.

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<sup>70</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (CMS: London 1916), IV p. 525.

<sup>71</sup> Ian C. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 37.

The July 1887 issue of the *Gleaner* contained an article and photographs on the Royal Family's involvement with the CMS to mark the Queen's golden jubilee. The photographs mostly show the Queen receiving various missionaries during the second half of the 19th century, including Samuel Crowther, the first Black African bishop in West Africa and himself a liberated slave. Prince Albert took a special interest in Africa and chaired the inaugural meeting in 1839 of the Society for the Civilization of Africa so he may have interested Victoria in the work of the CMS.

Victoria's main interest in connection with West African missionaries lies in a long association with Sarah Forbes Davies (previously Bonetta) and her daughter, Victoria, which started in 1850. The British government sent Captain Forbes, R. N., to Dahomey in May 1850 to try to convince the king, Gezo, to give up the slave trade.<sup>72</sup> King Gezo sent to Queen Victoria the gift of a Yoruban girl, aged between 7 and 9 years who had been captured with her parents. They had been killed. She was baptised Sarah Forbes Bonetta, the last name being the name of Forbes' ship. Victoria Davies in her account of her mother's capture suggests that her father was a prince who was killed when his town was captured by the Dahomians.<sup>73</sup> It was not unusual for King Gezo to send gifts to the Queen. He also gave the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, the WMMS missionary, two slave girls for the Queen, one for the governor and one for Freeman himself.<sup>74</sup> They were sent to school in Cape Town and then back to their own country. What was unusual about Sarah was that she was taken to England. Forbes gave this description of her 'She now speaks English well and has a great talent for music. Nothing can exceed her docile and amiable conduct.'<sup>75</sup> Her attractive personality may have had much to do with the decision to bring her London. Although it may seem odd that the gifts of slave girls were accepted, it was believed, certainly in the case of Sarah, that they would otherwise have been sacrificed. Sarah was seen as especially interesting because of her obvious

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<sup>72</sup> *CM Gleaner* 'The Story of King Gezo's Gift to Queen Victoria', January 1880 pp. 134-5.

<sup>73</sup> Cheltenham Ladies College Archives Letter from Victoria Davies to Mrs. Dent, Sudeley Castle (not dated).

<sup>74</sup> Norman Birtwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman* (London: Corgate Allan Press, 1950), p. 85.

<sup>75</sup> Frederick Edwin Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomians* (London: Longman, 1851), p. 208.

intelligence which it was considered at the time might test the assertion that, while Negro children might be clever, the adult might be stupid.<sup>76</sup>

A water colour of her was painted (see App.VI Fig. 2). Her head was seen as an excellent phrenological specimen and there was talk of a bust being made of her by the medallist to the Mint, Pistrucci, although this does not seem to have happened. Phrenology, the analysis of the contours of the skull to determine a person's characteristics and talents, was popular with Victorians. It was seen as a way to determine intellectual capacity and propensity to crimes, for example. One of the country's leading phrenologists, George Combe of Edinburgh, studied George Eliot's head and noted 'the very large brain'.<sup>77</sup>

It was decided that Sarah should not be brought up in England but was sent to the CMS Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone (see Chapter IV) under the redoubtable Miss Sass. The school was used for this purpose from time to time, provided somebody would pay the fees. For example the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* carried a report in 1889 of the death of Mrs. Amy Elba who had been 'wrested' from her parents in East Africa and sent to the school, probably in 1879.<sup>78</sup> The Annie Walsh school register shows that Sarah entered in June 1851 but does not record when she left. To complete her education Sarah later went to school in Brighton and was also in the care of the Rev. and Mrs. Schon, CMS missionaries. She married, as his second wife, J. P. L. Davies, a leading merchant at Lagos.

During her years in Lagos, as the wife of a prominent African, she ran the CMS Female Institute for a short while without being paid (see App. VI, Fig. 3). Her first child, Victoria, was born in 1863 and this provided a further link with the Queen who sent a silver christening cup. She returned to England at least twice before her death in 1880 and visited the Queen. She had two other children but the Queen seems to have had no interest in these. Sarah's death coincided with her husband's bankruptcy and the Queen settled on Victoria, her goddaughter, an annuity and, at the girl's own

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 208.

<sup>77</sup> Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 14 September 1889 p. 4.



request, she went to Cheltenham Ladies College, started in 1853, as the first African pupil. The Queen paid the fees for the two years at the most that Victoria was a pupil there. She was keen on music and later played at charity concerts in Freetown. She worked at the CMS Female Institution in Lagos before marrying in 1891 a Doctor Randle, who studied medicine at St. Andrews and practised in Lagos. She continued her visits to the Royal Family visiting the Queen at Windsor in September 1900 with her two children. The daughter was godchild to one of the Queen's daughters, Beatrice, Princess Henry of Battenberg, after whom the daughter was named and to whom an annuity of £35 was paid for her education. Prince Henry had died of malaria in the campaign against the Asante in 1896.

Queen Victoria's interest in West African missions must be seen in the context of her interest generally in missionary work, for example, David Livingstone and Dr. Krapf who undertook pioneering missionary work in East Africa. The Queen was also interested in missionary work in India and made a statement 'We would wish it to be generally known that we sympathise with every effort made to relieve the suffering state of the women of India'.<sup>79</sup> Her reception of Samuel Crowther is also not so unexpected. He was after all a curiosity, the first African to be ordained, and may well have been marked for greater things by the CMS in 1851, the date of his visit to the Queen.

It has been suggested that the Queen was always attracted by the exotic and this may have been part of the reason for her interest in missions.<sup>80</sup> The Queen's interest had possibly been stimulated by Prince Albert but continued throughout her life. How far it can be seen as driven by a common feminism is open to question. The Queen was opposed to women being in public life, apart from that is herself and Florence Nightingale. She was particularly horrified at the prospect of women doctors. 'But to tear away all the barriers which surround a woman and to propose that they should study with men - things which could not be named before them - certainly not in a mixed audience - would be to introduce a total disregard of what must be considered

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<sup>79</sup> J. C. Pollock, *Shadows Fall Apart* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), p. 44.

<sup>80</sup> Dorothy Thompson, *Victoria - gender and power* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 61.



as belonging to the rules and principles of morality.'<sup>81</sup> What the Queen thought of female missionaries, particularly the single ones and those who were doctors is not known. Missionary work blurred the distinction between the public and private spheres and was conducted a long way from England and so may have been less unacceptable. Whilst feminists could not rely on the Queen to support their views, she was aware of some of the problems which women faced.

### IX Concluding Remarks

The work of women missionaries in West Africa has long been a neglected area, except for a few exceptional women like Mary Slessor. Part of the explanation for this is that missionary history is male orientated and women could scarcely be seen as doing such important work. This attitude is reflected in the records available to the researcher which are overwhelmingly official. What information there is on women is largely buried within the extensive missionary archives and the researcher is faced with the daunting prospect of trawling through these. Why did the missionaries insist on writing on tissue thin paper on both sides and, if this was not enough, squeezing in even more by then writing vertically, even when requested not to by the missionary secretariat. Added to this are the difficulties under which some of the letters were written so that they are watermarked, by rain, sweat or perhaps tears. However, it is good that so much has survived. The increasing use of the typewriter towards the end of the century which seemingly brings with it the discipline of using sub-headings comes as a great relief.

Using the Basel Mission archives presented even greater obstacles for a someone with a rusty knowledge of German but this was sufficient for me to be able to identify a limited number of letters which I had translated. In addition there is a considerable amount on the Mission available in English. So far as I am aware, little or no work has previously been done on the archives of the Qua Ibo Missionary Society which I looked at in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. The Qua Iboe Society was run on very limited resources and was very much the expression of the faith of one man and his wife. This made a useful contrast with the well-established CMS and

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<sup>81</sup> Phillip Guedalla, ed., *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), p. 271.

WMMS. I should have liked to have visited the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone but I had to be content with the not inconsiderable information in the CMS archives and that provided by the London alumni association of the school. As a long-standing institution, it is mentioned by those who have written histories of Sierra Leone but without the detailed account of the school and its development in the 19th century in Chapter IV. Part of its importance was as a place where female missionaries, African women teachers and girls worked, lived together and forged relationships.

To cover the work of women involved with five missionary societies operating in four countries and to look at this for a period of over one hundred years is a challenging task, given the sheer amount of work which women did and the limit to the number of words in a thesis. The inclusion of a section specifically on West African women has further complicated matters. I am conscious that the term 'West African women' is very general and covers groups ranging from the Creoles in Sierra Leone to the Igbos and Yorubas. I have tried to correct this by including all the available information about women and places but this information is limited. Despite these caveats I feel that a section on African women, those whose lives were radically affected by the faith which the missionaries brought, provides a more balanced picture than much other research on women and missions has done. My time in Accra provided useful information on this subject and also on the work that is currently being done there to recover information on the lives of local women.

One intention behind my research was to provide a wide-ranging assessment of how women were involved with missions in West Africa. This was the reason too why there is a section on the work of women in Britain since this places them in the context of their domestic mission. Women were essential to the success or otherwise of the overseas missions. My research into the work of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS has revealed that women could be at least as good as men in running a missionary society. I wanted also to give an impression of the vitality of the missionary movement at home and the way in which it absorbed the energies of those who could not, for whatever reasons, serve abroad. The Basel Mission Society still

occupies the premises built for it in 1860 in Missionstrasse, Basel, Switzerland and anyone who visits it, as I did, cannot fail to be impressed by its statement of wealth and solidity. Next to it is the Mission's rather gloomy children's home (to serve its missionaries going overseas) situated in the most unattractive part of the site and apparently referred to by contemporaries as 'the orphanage'. Nearer to home is St. Augustine's College in Canterbury which opened in 1849 to train Anglican missionaries and is now occupied by the King's School. This was the first major work of William Butterfield where his chapel, cloisters and library recreated a medieval world.<sup>82</sup> Much of the fund raising for buildings like these were the result of women's efforts, as Prochaska has pointed out, although they received little acknowledgement in public for what they did. Colleges such as these turned out the men who took their wives abroad in what were the beginnings of women's work overseas. In turn they paved the way for the widows who chose to remain in West Africa after their husband's death and ultimately for the single female missionaries who were an increasingly important part of the missionary force from the 1880s onwards.

The main result of the large number of women missionaries was that work among indigenous women could be expanded. In West Africa, ignoring Northern Nigeria, only a few women were kept in seclusion but, even so, it was much easier for female missionaries to work with the local women, although how far they saw themselves as sharing a common femininity is doubtful. It can be argued that the independence of women missionaries provided some sort of role model for local women to aspire to but the European way of life must have seemed way beyond the hopes of most, except for a few women married to Africans who achieved high office in the church. At the Annie Walsh Memorial School it was never considered that a local woman could be the headmistress.

The deaths of women serving overseas in the missionary cause were frequent in the 19th century. It was expected that men would die for Queen and country but for

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<sup>82</sup> John Newman, *The Buildings of England: North East Kent and East Kent* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 108.

middle-class women, the Angel in the Hearth, the situation was different. How to explain the need for their deaths was a problem for the missionary societies. They resorted to publishing popular books about missionary heroines and also popular biographies. This also had the advantage that it increased public knowledge of the work of the societies. It was also suitable reading matter for a dull Sunday and made a change from the Bible or *Pilgrim's Progress*. Evangelical beliefs, however, were not difficult to ridicule and, perhaps in a curious way, the Victorian public enjoyed such ridicule. It was not difficult for authors like Dickens to satirise such beliefs. Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*, who neglects her family for her missionary work, has been one of his many enduring characters. One particular criticism was that the societies were guilty of 'telescopic philanthropy' and were overlooking the needs of those at home. In practice, however, it seems likely that those who supported missionaries also supported philanthropic work at home. In any case the 'heathens' overseas were seen as having just as much right to have their souls saved as those at home, perhaps even more so since they were believed to live in unrelieved darkness. My interest in 19th century fiction led me to include a chapter on the depiction of the missionary heroine, both in the missionary press and, as a contrast, by some of the main authors of the period. Much research into missions has centred on the missionary archives, including mine. There is a danger, however, that by doing this some of part of the wider picture may be lost. I hope to have avoided this in part by looking at the comments by contemporaries who were not part of the missionary movement and who were critical of it and of imperialism.

The next five chapters explore these issues in more detail whilst the final chapter attempts to draw out appropriate conclusions.

## **Chapter II Women's Missionary Work at Home**

### **'She hath done what she could'<sup>1</sup>**

#### **I. Introduction**

In an address to the Princeton Female Society, the speaker chose this quotation from the New Testament to tell women what they could and could not properly do.<sup>2</sup> Females, he suggested, had a shrinking delicacy which rendered them unfit for command and subjected them to the 'rougher sex'. Women's role was to instruct children and use their influence as mothers and sisters as well as rendering services to ministers and missionaries. They could associate together for prayer and take part in missionary concerns, especially fund-raising. The burgeoning missionary societies required considerable support from those at home for their activities in the countries to which they sent missionaries and women became an important part of this effort. They were able to play a leading role in various missionary agencies 'far earlier than they could decently appear in most other walks of life'.<sup>3</sup> In the United States the women's missionary organizations undergirded the missionary movement with prayer, study, financial support and dissemination of information.<sup>4</sup> The need for funding rapidly grew as the missionaries, both male and female, began to be sent out in increasing numbers as the 19th century advanced. Not only were salaries to be paid but also housing had to be provided and schools and churches built, since the support which could be expected from indigenous congregations was small, at least to start with. By 1900 there were forty-one American women's agencies supporting 1200 single women missionaries.<sup>5</sup>

Training of missionaries also grew in importance with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) being the first body in England to establish a training college for men in

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 14:8.

<sup>2</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, *All Loves Excelling* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 328.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald H. Anderson, 'American Protestants in Pursuit of Missions 1886-1986', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 12 (1988), 98-118 (p. 102).

Islington in 1825.<sup>6</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) opened its first 'theological institution' in 1837.<sup>7</sup> Formal training for female missionaries was not started until the last decades of the 19th century. The societies needed to establish a presence at home to ensure that there was no lack of candidates for their work. These twin aspects of funding the societies' work and helping to ensure a supply of candidates were two of the most important functions for those who joined the missionary societies at home. Prochaska has argued that women were an important part of this effort and made a considerable contribution to the funds raised by the missionary societies.<sup>8</sup> He suggests that the CMS in its early years largely depended on its women's auxiliaries for funds. For example in one year the CMS raised nearly £29,000 from fancy goods sales, which were organised by women.<sup>9</sup> A similar experience has been suggested for the WMMS.<sup>10</sup> Much of this funding was used to support the general work of the two societies and was not directly concerned with the work of female missionaries.

When the missionary societies were founded at the end of the 18th century, the idea that women should belong, except as subscribers, was not considered.<sup>11</sup> It was only when the needs of women overseas, particularly in India, were made known that women's societies for missionary work came into existence. Although most women's auxiliaries were seen as helpmeets to the societies, the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS was one organisation which achieved a considerable autonomy for itself, due partly to one particularly energetic and forceful woman committee member. In early Methodism the sexes were separated so allowing women to develop their leadership, public speaking and teaching skills.<sup>12</sup> This may have paved the way for the emergence of a reasonably powerful auxiliary for women. The role of the Women's

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), I p. 265.

<sup>7</sup> George Gillanders Findlay, & William West Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* 5 vols (London: SPCK, 1922), I p. 100.

<sup>8</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> George Gillanders Findlay, & William West Holdsworth, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Louise Creighton, *The Ministry of Women* (London: SPCK, 1908), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Lillian Lewis Shiman, *Women and Leadership in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 21.

Auxiliary has been described as ‘... assisting the Parent Society independently, raising its own funds and appointing its own officers in concert with the Missionary Society [i.e. WMMS] but taking no orders from it or the Conference’.<sup>13</sup> It has been further suggested that ‘from the outset Methodist women have played an indispensable part in the actual service. Not infrequently they have been the initiators rather than the auxiliaries’.<sup>14</sup> The activities of the Women’s Auxiliary provide an insight into the way in which such societies organised themselves, their relations with the main society and how they saw themselves in performing their task. The Women’s Auxiliary was also involved in selecting and training female missionaries. It had very little to do with missionary wives who were seen as the responsibility of the WMMS. The women’s auxiliary societies of the CMS enjoyed a less exalted status, partly because they had no central organisation comparable to the WMMS Women’s Auxiliary. The CMS female auxiliaries were not concerned with training or recruitment. This role was performed by the CMS itself, although a Women’s Department was set up in 1895 to co-ordinate women’s work for the CMS at home and abroad.<sup>15</sup> However in the last two decades of the 19th century, as the number of female candidates grew, the CMS developed considerable facilities for training its female missionaries, although these were never on the same scale as those for men. The days of the untrained female missionary were coming to an end by 1880. The CMS was using The Willows and The Olives for training its female missionaries and also opened its own training home at Highbury. In Scotland the Women’s Training Institute was founded in 1894 by Annie Small.<sup>16</sup> Even prior to this some attempt was made at training women in Scotland. Mary Slessor who went to Nigeria in 1876 was required to spend three months doing teacher training in Edinburgh, although she criticised this training as not being practical enough.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> George Gillanders Findlay & William West Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* 5 vols (London: SPCK, 1922), I p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. IV p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS 1899 & 1915), III p. 662.

<sup>16</sup> Rhonda A. Semple, ‘Ladies of Much Ability and Intelligence’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2002), p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria 1846-1960* (London: Brill, 1996), p. 118.



The smaller missionary societies, such as the Qua Iboe Missionary Society based in Belfast, did not have the resources to provide any training and recruited those who had trained elsewhere. There were a number of such missionary training colleges, for example for men there was Harley College in the East End of London run by Dr. Grattan Guinness and inspired by Moody and Sankey, the American evangelists. For women there were the Doric Lodge (closely connected with Harley College), the YWCA Testing and Training Home for Foreign Missions, the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow and the Chelsea Missionary Training Home as well as others. In the United States in 1915 there were 25 denominational and 10 inter-denominational missionary training schools for women.<sup>18</sup> The WMMS, separately from the Women's Auxiliary, used deaconesses to run its schools for girls in West Africa. They studied at the deaconesses' training institutes, principally in Ilkley, Yorkshire, primarily for work at home but seemed to transfer readily to work in Africa. Missionary wives (and fiancées) received no training. In a number of cases they had gone out as single female missionaries and then married, and, if not, were often daughters or sisters of ministers or had worked extensively in parishes at home so any training was considered unnecessary. Although the rules varied or were sometimes ignored, most missionaries had to seek permission to get married. This required an investigation into the fiancée's background, including a report from their minister who would have been aware of what parish work the fiancée was involved in and this may have played a part in the decision on whether to permit the marriage or not. The training of female missionaries for both the WMMS and the CMS provided a further way for women to enter a profession in addition to those such as medicine and law which were slowly being forced to open their doors to women towards the end of the 19th century. Training to be a missionary also provided an alternative to the traditional career of teaching for single women.

This chapter looks in detail at the work of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS starting from its inauguration in 1858. It looks at the way in which the Auxiliary managed its relations with the WMMS, especially the way in which Mrs. Wiseman, a

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<sup>18</sup> Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), p. 127.



long-standing committee member, was able to strengthen and extend the Auxiliary's role. This is followed by a section on the training of female missionaries by the CMS and the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS.

## II. The Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS

The origins of the Auxiliary are not clear. According to its official (female) historian, the origins of the Ladies Auxiliary of the WMMS (it was later to become the Women's Auxiliary), can be traced back to pressure from the wives of the missionaries sent out by the Wesleyans.<sup>19</sup> One of these, the wife of the Rev. P. Batchelor, who herself had been a missionary sent out by the Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the East, ran a boarding school in Jaffna, Ceylon and, being in need of an assistant, wrote to a Mrs. Farmer, the wife of the then lay treasurer of the WMMS, urging the setting up of a Ladies' Society to assist in such cases. Another version, by a man, suggests that the Auxiliary was formed at the request of the WMMS to select female teachers and to provide money for their support.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that there were a variety of reasons for creating the Auxiliary and that different writers seized on the version which suited them best. Whatever the reasons, the Auxiliary's establishment was a recognition that women could do more than just raise funds for missions.

The initial name chosen for the Auxiliary was the 'The Ladies' Committee for the Amelioration of the Condition of Women in Heathen Countries, Female Education, etc.' and it was formed on 20th December 1858. It was usually referred to as the Ladies' Auxiliary and, later on, as the Women's Auxiliary. There were already two societies in existence with similar aims. The Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society was largely inspired by Lady Kinnaird, although the officers were men. The Society for Promoting Female Education in the East was non-denominational and founded in 1834.<sup>21</sup> It did not restrict its work entirely to the East,

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<sup>19</sup> Anna M. Hellier, *Workers Together: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London: Cargate Press, 1931), p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> John Telford, *A Short History of the Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missions* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1906), p. 233.

<sup>21</sup> Emma Raymond Pitman, *Indian Zenana Missions* (London: John Snow, nd), p. 21.

for example it provided funds to support pupils at the Annie Walsh Memorial School (see Chapter III). The Auxiliary was set up along lines similar to that of the General Committee of the WMMS, although its activities were on a very much smaller scale. The members met once a month, beginning with prayers and singing conducted by a minister, although this feature was later to be dropped. The number of ladies attending the meetings varied and could be as many as twenty or sometimes as few as six. Large attendance meant that much of the business was discussed and decided prior to the meeting. This was to change with the appointment of Mrs. Wiseman in 1874 who remained a member for 38 years and was the Auxiliary's Foreign Secretary for much of that time. Membership of the Auxiliary was by invitation and the members often served for very long periods.

Secretaries were appointed from among the members of the Auxiliary. Over time the most important post came to be that of the Foreign Secretary who was responsible for dealing with the correspondence with the agents which the Auxiliary sent overseas. The secretaries were honorary posts in line with the idea that middle class ladies could be involved in charitable work but could not undertake paid work. However, with the increase in workload as more agents were sent overseas, paid assistants were employed. The increase in workload also meant that sub-committees had to be set up e.g. to discuss urgent matters which could not wait for the regular monthly meetings and also to consider candidates. Premises were provided by the WMMS. Since many of the Auxiliary members were related to the officers of the WMMS and the fact that both the Auxiliary and the WMMS operated from the same address meant that relations were closer than appeared from the formal links. The fact that the Auxiliary was what its title said it was - an auxiliary of the main Society - meant that it was ultimately subject to the overall wishes of the WMMS, despite raising its own funds and having its officers and staff. The history of the Auxiliary from its inception in 1858 does not show that there was ever a contest of wills but the Auxiliary did make known its dissatisfaction with some of the decisions of the WMMS and attempted to put their own case, not always unsuccessfully. No doubt they would also have tried to influence husbands who held office in the WMMS. It has been suggested that the Auxiliary was intended to work on its own and as a sister organisation rather than

being controlled from the centre, although given that many members were related to people working at WMMS Mission House there were grounds for assuming a mutual understanding.<sup>22</sup> The Auxiliary did enjoy considerable autonomy, particularly over the selection and appointment of their lady agents as they were called. Although there were obvious advantages to this, they sometimes felt that they had been pushed to one side and, having been given a particular role, were not consulted about other developments as the WMMS expanded its operations. It has been suggested that women's missionary societies were at an advantage compared with the main missionary societies because they had low costs resulting from the voluntary nature of the work and because of the lower salaries of their agents who did not have to support families. The result was the most inexpensive missionary service for Protestants.<sup>23</sup> Catholic female missionaries were even cheaper because nuns did not receive a salary.

An important constraint to the expansion of the work of the Auxiliary was funding. Although they were remarkably adroit at finding novel ways of funding their work, the amount they could raise was small compared with that of the WMMS. Like many of the contributions to the missionary societies, the funds came in very small amounts which required considerable efforts to collect. This meant that the Auxiliary members had to devote considerable time both in encouraging existing givers and getting new subscriptions. This distracted them from the main task of promoting their work overseas. However, the fund-raising provided means not only for those interested in missionary work to socialise but also a way in which they could be kept informed and involved in a practical way, even if they could not serve overseas.

Over the years the title of the Ladies' Auxiliary changed to reflect its developing role and also the changes that were taking place in society in general. In 1875 the name was changed to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Ladies' Auxiliary for Female Education.<sup>24</sup> This may have indicated a new relationship with the WMMS as

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<sup>22</sup> George Gillanders Findlay & William West Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* 5 vols (London: SPCK, 1922), IV p.20.

<sup>23</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, *All Loves Excelling* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 179.

<sup>24</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Ladies' Auxiliary Minute Book II *Minutes of the Meeting of the Ladies' Auxiliary* 25 March 1873, p. 135

a helper rather than an initiator. In 1893 the title was changed to the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS. There was no discussion in the minutes of the reasons for this change but perhaps it reflected the idea that 'Young ladies did not work: women did'.<sup>25</sup> There seems to have been some ambivalence about the change as for some time after 1893 there were still references to the Ladies' Auxiliary even in its quarterly publication *Women's Work On the Mission Field*. The new title reflected a flexibility and willingness to come to terms with changes in the work of the Auxiliary and the needs it had to meet.

The Auxiliary was quick to send out lady agents and its first appointment was a Miss Susannah Beal, a schoolteacher, who was sent to Belize, Central America, dying there in October 1859. The rapidity with which the Auxiliary was able to send out an agent suggests that there was no shortage of applicants to work for the Auxiliary. Although it was officially concerned with the East there seems to have been no difficulty in sending the first candidate elsewhere. Apart from the cost of training their female agents which amounted to little in the early years, the Auxiliary had to pay for passages out and back (for India the cost seems to have been about £25 each way), £15 for their outfits and their salary. Outfits would have varied depending on the country of destination. However there is no information about what such outfits consisted of. Perhaps it was felt indelicate to mention this. Dennis Kemp described the outfit necessary for men at the Gold Coast in the late 19th century. This included flannel or merino to be worn next to the skin, a helmet and white cotton umbrella and a flannel belt which was felt useful to ward off dysentery.<sup>26</sup> Women's outfits would have been analogous. Accommodation was usually provided but the agents had to pay for their own board. The salaries were £100 a year whilst some other societies paid slightly more e.g. the CMS £105-125. All these rates were above what single female teachers would have been earning, especially as accommodation was included. Assistant women teachers in London in 1883, for example, under the new scale were earning £50-125.<sup>27</sup> The Auxiliary was usually very concerned that applicants should

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<sup>25</sup> Duncan Crow, *The Victorian Woman* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Dennis Kemp, *Nine Years at the Gold Coast* (London: MacMillan, 1898), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Dina M. Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 75.

be long standing Methodists and presumably the other missionary societies operated similarly so there was little chance of agents changing societies. Half pay was received whilst at home on leave in England. Eventually a pension fund was established from money raised through the Jubilee Fund of 1908.<sup>28</sup> In 1917 this paid £26 a year after 25 years' service, hardly generous but enough if a friend or relative could provide accommodation.<sup>29</sup> Within the limits of the funds available, the Auxiliary tried to provide for the welfare of its agents.

The Auxiliary sent out single or widowed agents only and there was great concern to see that they served their full term of six years. Many of them married missionaries, some of whom they met on the long journey to India, and once married they were unable to work for the Auxiliary, although they would be expected to continue work alongside their husbands who were employed by the WMMS. Those female agents who left the Auxiliary had to repay the expenses of passage and outfit on a sliding scale - the full amount if they left within 1-2 years and one quarter if they left in their fifth year. This caused hardship for some agents but the Auxiliary remained adamant.<sup>30</sup> The move can be interpreted as authoritarian and anti-marriage but needs to be assessed in the light of the limited resources of the Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary was concerned that its agents should be treated with the respect they felt was due to them, although it was accepted that they were to be under the supervision of the local missionary superintendent. The fact that this had to be spelt out from time to time suggests that some agents did suffer in this respect. In 1901 there was a complaint from a Rev. Martin about one of the female missionaries at his station. The Auxiliary responded by saying that, if she were treated as an equal, he would find her amenable.<sup>31</sup> However the authority of the Auxiliary was insufficient to satisfy the Rev. Martin and in the end the Auxiliary had to write to the female missionary. In the rules and regulations laid down for its agents in 1912 the Auxiliary

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<sup>28</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 9 *Minutes of the Officers' Meeting of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS* 14 June 1908, p.70.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Minute Book 11 13 February 1917, p.89.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Minute Book 6 10 February 1891, p.21.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Minute Book 7 9 July 1901, p.371.

suggested that an agent serving her second term of office, by which time she would be considerably experienced in the work, should be given 'the special consideration to which her experience entitles her'. The agents were under the superintendent of the circuit in which the mission station was situated for their daily work but in matters of discipline they were answerable to the chairman of the circuit. The Auxiliary complained that the superintendent might be junior in age to their agent and also that their agents had no formal place in the district synod when their work was being discussed. The answer was given that individual workers were invited to attend. Although there were no attempts to change the arrangement formally, there were attempts to meet the Auxiliary's objections on an informal basis. This cannot have been satisfactory but the question was not raised again.

Overall relations with the General Committee of the WMMS were generally cordial and both sides seemed anxious to accommodate the wishes of the other but the evidence suggests that the General Committee had the ruling hand. It made a grant to the Auxiliary which was never more than £4-500 a year but this may have been seen as giving the Committee some say in setting limitations on the work for which the Auxiliary could be responsible. The Auxiliary was never in a position to manage without this grant. Early on in its existence the Auxiliary agreed a memorial to be sent to the General Committee on the nature and extent of their supervision of the Auxiliary. Its members appeared anxious to act in accordance with the views of the General Committee and to secure their sanction for their actions but not to accept detailed control. In 1877 the Auxiliary agreed to consult the General Secretary of the WMMS before sending, transferring or recalling an agent. It also agreed that reports on its work should be given to the Committee from time to time. In 1878 the Auxiliary became very upset when the General Committee proposed setting up a separate female agency for Zenana work. They submitted a memorial welcoming Zenana work but deploring that it was not to be undertaken by themselves.<sup>32</sup> In reply the Committee said that it was never intended that the Auxiliary should carry out all the female work abroad and that, as the Zenana work was new, it could not inaugurate it. The compromise agreed was that the Auxiliary should take over the Zenana work

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Book III 9 July 1878, pp. 19-20

once it was established. The Zenana missions were inspired by the conditions under which women lived in India. These were seen to include suttee (although officially abolished in 1829), child marriage, polygyny, infanticide (for daughters), and prevention of re-marriage (also in theory abolished). The Zenana work was an exciting new development which the Auxiliary felt it was competent to see through but the work appears to have been seen by the General Committee as beyond the resources which the Auxiliary could find. The Committee may also have wanted to have the kudos for the new work.

The disagreement over the Zenana work led to a further round of discussions within the Auxiliary of its role. It was recognised that the Auxiliary was subsidiary to the General Committee and was prepared to consult the General Secretaries or the Committee but not to be dictated to. In practice the Auxiliary had little option but to fall in with the suggestions from the General Committee. In 1897 the Auxiliary members were very annoyed that the Annual Report of the WMMS implied that the Synod appointed the female agents. This error does not seem to have been repeated. In 1901 the Auxiliary suggested that the General Secretaries of the WMMS should become members of the Auxiliary and attend its meetings. This seems to have been the outcome of the desire by the Auxiliary to work more closely with the parent Society.<sup>33</sup> This suggestion was rejected but in 1903 it was agreed that the Auxiliary and General Committee should meet quarterly. At the same time the Auxiliary drafted a resolution that the forthcoming Methodist Conference should agree a more definite and official recognition of its work. In 1916 a special committee of the Auxiliary discussed relations with the WMMS. It agreed to press for the Auxiliary's Annual Report to be presented at the annual WMMS Conference by someone from the Auxiliary and that the Conference should be asked to accept ten women representatives from the Auxiliary. Much of this was agreed.<sup>34</sup> In 1927 the Auxiliary ceased to exist and a Women's Department was set up within the WMMS, echoing the arrangement which the CMS had had since 1895.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Minute Book 7 12 March 1901 p.346.

<sup>34</sup> Anna M. Hellier, *Workers Together: The Story of the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London: Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS, 1931), p. 56.



The Auxiliary seems to have been concerned that its contribution to missionary work was undervalued and under-publicised. There seems to have been some justification for this. At the annual public meetings held by the Auxiliary, the report of its work was usually read by a Wesleyan minister. The Rev. Olver, who read the report in 1885, at the request of the Auxiliary, suggested that the London meeting might follow the example of the ladies in Birmingham by allowing the Lady Secretary of the Auxiliary to read the report.<sup>35</sup> The Auxiliary seems to have been reluctant to push itself forward in public and it was not until 1888 that its lady members began to play a more prominent role at the annual public meetings. Eventually a compromise seems to have been reached for the 1894 annual meeting. A Mrs. Holgood was in the chair for the afternoon session with lady speakers whilst there was a male chair and speakers in the evening. Since it would have been mostly women who attended in the afternoon, there was no danger of the Auxiliary women being thought too forward. The reason for the men taking the lead seems to have been custom rather than any conscious decision.

The Auxiliary used its magazine *Women's Work on the Mission Field* to provide information for those who supported its work. This was issued quarterly, initially at a price of 1d and later raised to 1½d. The magazine, like many others of its type, did not make a profit. In 1906, for example, 15,000 copies were printed at a cost of £344 and sales realised £272, a deficit £50 lower than in the previous year.<sup>36</sup> Presumably it was thought more important to gain access to a wide readership in the hope that this might result in greater support for the work of the Auxiliary rather than increase the price and put it beyond the means of many readers. The magazine was professionally produced with plenty of photographs and included both contributed articles and letters from the Auxiliary's agents, describing what was going on at their mission station. The magazine was also used as a means of opinion forming. The January 1901 issue, for example, compared subscriptions from men and women to the missionary cause.<sup>37</sup> Men's subscription to the WMMS might be £10, or five or two guineas, whereas the wife's subscription to Women's Auxiliary might be one guinea, ten shillings or even

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<sup>35</sup> *Methodist Recorder and General Christian Chronicle* 8 May 1885 p. 314.

<sup>36</sup> *Women's Work on the Mission Field* April 1907 p. 678.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* January 1901 p. 98.



five shillings. The editorial comment was that this was hardly fair. In the October 1901 issue an article explained that the Auxiliary did not seek to find what proportion of the women in native churches were there as a result of the efforts of the Auxiliary's agents. The article took a lofty viewpoint - 'Their numbers are registered on high'.<sup>38</sup> In any case, it was explained that the Auxiliary's work was so interwoven with that of the parent society as to be inseparable from it. In October 1910 a similar point was raised about the number of baptisms for which the Auxiliary's agents had been responsible. The answer, and there was no attempt to dress this up, was very few but nevertheless the Auxiliary asserted its belief in the value of providing schools. In 1896 a children's corner was introduced and in 1914 children were invited to become armour-bearers with the ideas of choosing a mission station and being associated with it. In 1918 a Girls' League corner was started. Occasionally there would be advertisements for a teacher required by the Auxiliary. From time to time the Auxiliary produced other publications. It produced two series of booklets for children, *Effies' Substitute* and *Only a Girl*. For its Jubilee in 1908 it produced *Hands Across the Sea*, priced at 1s 6d as well as a jubilee brooch.

The Auxiliary also developed a 'cradle to death' approach to promote interest in its work and to sustain this interest. Organisations were set up catering for all ages. Sewing circles had from the start been one way in which those interested in missionary work could meet together and produce articles which could be sold at sales of work, bazaars, etc. The Auxiliary also accepted clothes or materials which could be made into clothes by the people at the missions. Such items were sorted and packed into boxes to be sent overseas. Groups of women met together to make up the contents of the boxes. This provided an important means not only for those interested in missionary work to socialise but also a way in which they could be kept informed and involved in a practical way. They could feel that they were responding to the needs of the mission stations which often wanted sewing materials or print skirts. In 1905 the Auxiliary agreed to set up Baby Bands which had been inaugurated by the Presbyterian Missionary Society. Boys and girls could be members from birth until the age of five. The subscription was 6d a year or 2s 6d for five years and the children

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. October 1901 p. 154.

received pictures. An additional advantage was the mothers were also kept interested in missionary work. In 1911 there were 420 members in the Baby Band.<sup>39</sup> Children could progress from the Baby Bands to the Busy Bees and the transition was helped by the fact that the local secretaries of the Busy Bees were also secretaries of the Baby Bands. The Busy Bees produced items for sales of work and, although primarily meant for girls, boys were not discouraged from joining and they produced items of woodwork. The idea of a follow-up to the Busy Bees, i.e. a Young Women's Auxiliary, had been broached in 1880 but nothing had come of this. As part of the 50th jubilee effort in 1908, the Girls' League was started to follow on from when the children were too old for the activities organised by the Busy Bees. By 1917 there were 33 branches of the Girls' League and its first annual conference was held in 1919. In 1913 the Auxiliary decided to set up a Home Preparation Unit which was aimed particularly at those who might eventually want to become missionaries themselves but also for those who wished to be kept more closely informed about missionary activities.<sup>40</sup> The CMS had set up something similar for both sexes in 1897.<sup>41</sup>

The Auxiliary's income and expenditure were very modest to begin with. In 1865 when it had been in existence for seven years its income was £825 and its expenditure £785.<sup>42</sup> By 1880 the corresponding figures were £2940 and £3169 but income had risen to £7,000 by 1888 and to £10,195 in 1895. By 1910 this had more than doubled to £23,501 and by 1919 the budget was £38,000. With salaries of around £100 a year for its agents (£60 if they were Eurasians) and grants to schools of modest amounts because these were usually financed by fees and expected to be self-supporting wherever possible, the Auxiliary managed to spread its resources widely. By 1918 it had 110 female agents and 300 local helpers; by comparison in 1888 the numbers were 24 and 52 respectively.<sup>43</sup> It concentrated its activities mostly in India, China and

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. October 1911 p. 301.

<sup>40</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 10 *Minutes of the Meeting of the Women's Auxiliary* 8 July 1913, p.106.

<sup>41</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS 1899 & 1915), III p. 702.

<sup>42</sup> WMMS Archives *Ladies' Auxiliary of the WMMS Papers 1864-65* pp. 746/7.

<sup>43</sup> Anna M. Hellier, 'Radiant with Hope, A Birthday Collection', *Women's Work on the Mission Field* October 1918 p. 362.

Ceylon and its involvement in South and West Africa was on a small scale.

Interestingly enough the WMMS turned to the Wesleyan Deaconess Order to run its schools in West Africa rather than the Auxiliary (see Chapter III).

Despite all its efforts to raise money, funding remained a perennial problem for the Auxiliary. Although it received a small grant from the General Committee of the WMMS which also provided offices, the Auxiliary was largely dependent on its own efforts through its local groups. These went under a variety of names e.g. Ladies Missionary Group, Hackney, the Ladies Sewing Group, Mildmay Park, the Children's Working Society, Brentford. Lists of contributions from such groups were published in *Women's Work*. There are references in the minutes to the contributions from the various circuits of Wesleyan Methodism, for example of 751 circuits, 322 contributed nothing and 37 under £1.<sup>44</sup> In 1902 it was agreed that each branch of the Auxiliary should appoint an extension secretary to prepare a list of circuits and chapels where little was being done to raise funds. This was partly successful since in 1902 nine local women's auxiliaries contributed over £200. The Auxiliary was very concerned to balance its books at the end of the year and, since there was frequently a deficit even if small, this involved considerable efforts by the committee members to raise the money. In 1903, for example, an anonymous member of the Auxiliary donated £500 to clear the debts at the end of the financial year, a not inconsiderable sum, particularly from a woman. In 1906 the Auxiliary was £2016 in debt and this was cleared by a gift, although from whom was not stated.

Missionary collecting boxes were a regular source of income. Early on in 1866 even children had their own boxes with one scheme whereby on Wednesdays children put a half penny in a box which was passed round the class. The money which was contributed would otherwise probably have been spent on sweets and toys which must have installed an early sense of public self sacrifice for the missionary cause or perhaps just plain resentment. Legacies were never a major part of the Auxiliary's income but they were a useful supplement. The first legacy to the Auxiliary of £500

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<sup>44</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 7 *Minutes of the Women's Auxiliary* 11 February 1896, p.33.

was received in 1867 but from whom was not stated. In 1868 a member of the Auxiliary left a second £500 legacy. In 1898 legacies of £270 and £500 were received from the estates of two men. In 1907 £1,000 was received from the estate of a Miss Hayley. In 1904 the Shilling League was started by a Miss Harvey.<sup>45</sup> Methodist girls with little spare time and money met together to help the Auxiliary. The annual subscription was one shilling which could be paid in monthly instalments of 1d each. In 1897 the Auxiliary agreed that a game of missionary lotto should be devised and sold; with what success is not known.<sup>46</sup>

The Golden Jubilee in 1908 and the Diamond Jubilee of 1918 of the founding of the Auxiliary in 1858 gave opportunities for special fund-raising. On both occasions the Auxiliary underestimated the amount which it thought could be raised. In 1908 the initial aim was £10,000 but the WMMS General Committee suggested £20,000 as a more appropriate objective and in the end £26,162 was raised. The Auxiliary adopted a wide variety of schemes to raise the money, including a week of self-denial and the issue of cards pledging donations of various amounts. One ingenious scheme involved a reception where admission was by birthday bags containing as many coins as the years of the bearer. Part of the activities associated with the Jubilee included an exhibition of work by women and girls at the mission stations. This gave the public an opportunity to see what the Auxiliary's agents had achieved in a practical way. The exhibition was opened by Princess Alexander of Teck which gives an indication of how far the work of the Auxiliary had gained general acceptance. For the Diamond Jubilee the initial target was set at £50,000 but this was later raised to £100,000. This latter sum was eventually raised but it proved to be a very hard struggle. The money was used to provide training institutions for indigenous teachers and Bible women, buildings and equipment, a training fund for women missionaries together with a pension fund and a provident fund to help Bible women and local workers in their old age. The aims of the campaigns were not just to raise money but also to raise the profile of the women's missionary movement throughout Wesleyan Methodism in the

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<sup>45</sup> George Gillanders Findlay & William West Holdsworth, 5 vols *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London: SPCK, 1922), IV p. 63.

<sup>46</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 7 *Minutes of the Meeting of the Women's Auxiliary* 18 May 1897, p.125

hope of enrolling more members.<sup>47</sup> The Auxiliary also set up a fund in memory of a long-standing member of the Auxiliary, Mrs. Wiseman who died in 1912. This raised £2,512.

In 1859, shortly after its formation, the Auxiliary had been asked to provide agents in West Africa and two women offered to go out. It was considered, however, that their services should be declined because of the unhealthiness of the climate and, perhaps more importantly, there was no missionary wife in the area.<sup>48</sup> In 1878 in response to an urgent appeal for a female missionary in Lagos, the Auxiliary decided to offer £50 towards the salary and to seek other means to find a further £50 to pay the full salary. This probably meant that an individual would sponsor the female missionary and pay the additional £50. The appointee had to be invalided home shortly after arrival. The Auxiliary provided a grant of £50 a year for a girls' school in Lagos run by a Mrs. Campbell, an African woman. In 1894 Mrs. Campbell had written to the Auxiliary saying that she had 17 girls in the school, 8 of whom had just joined so she seemed to need the extra finance to pay for the expansion of the school. Since the Auxiliary was not active in Lagos at the time, she is likely to have been given information about the Auxiliary by one of the Wesleyan missionaries there. In 1894 the Auxiliary sent out a Miss Jackman to Aburi in the Gold Coast to set up an infants' school and to teach older girls. She lived with the Rev. and Mrs. Kemp, the Wesleyan missionaries there. She was assisted by African male teachers. She died three months after landing in what was described by the Rev. Kemp as 'a most beautiful death' by which he meant that she died believing in the expectation of eternal life thereafter.<sup>49</sup> He considered that she was deeply loved by her pupils.<sup>50</sup> In 1898 a Miss Ellenberger accompanied her brother, a Wesleyan missionary, to Aburi where she ran a boarding school and was supported by the Auxiliary. Curiously Miss Ellenberger divided her girls into two separate sections, erecting huts for those 'inland' girls who had come to the school.<sup>51</sup> They were weekly boarders not considered fit, for reasons not stated, to live

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<sup>47</sup> *Women's Work on the Mission Field* April 1918 p. 329.

<sup>48</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Ladies' Auxiliary Minute Book I *Minutes of the Meeting* 20 December 1859, p.24.

<sup>49</sup> Dennis Kemp, *Nine Years at the Gold Coast* (London: MacMillan, 1898), p.215.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p. 213.

<sup>51</sup> *Women's Work on the Mission Field* July 1900 p. 61.

in the main part of the boarding school with 'coast girls'. Missionaries had been working for far longer on the coast than in the interior of the Gold Coast where the Asante proved difficult to convert so this may be part of the reason. Aburi was described in *Women's Work* as 'the most difficult corner of our great battlefield'. Miss Ellenberger wrote an article for *Women's Work* in the April 1900 edition about cannibalism in the Gold Coast. She wrote that she had heard from a schoolteacher in a part of the Gold Coast recently annexed that the people there were almost, if not altogether, cannibals because they were asking for dead bodies. Given the rapid decay of bodies in the West African climate this seems an unlikely tale but it reminded the readers of *Women's Work* of the value of extending civilisation and religion in West Africa. Miss Ellenberger stayed ten years before returning home.

The Auxiliary had a delicate balancing act to perform in its activities. It could not be seen to be too successful otherwise it could be accused of taking away resources from the WMMS. This was particularly the case for fund-raising. The Auxiliary developed sources of income which could be seen as being peculiarly its own, such as sewing circles and Baby Bands. It developed these in conjunction with the needs, as it saw them, to stimulate and foster interest in its activities. To some extent it lacked the conviction of its own successes as was reflected in the low targets which it initially set for its jubilee campaign funds of 1908 and 1918. Part of its strength lay in its ability to organise the regular collections of very small amounts of money but which in total were significant. This was a common feature of many missionary societies. Members of the Auxiliary were unstinting in the amount of time which they devoted to the work of the Auxiliary. This meant that the number of paid officials was very small.

The Auxiliary's relations with the WMMS were mostly amicable and the Auxiliary did not attempt, for the most part, to make major changes to this relationship. They were content at their public meetings when these were open to both men and women for men to take the lead, although this was not uncommon for the period.<sup>52</sup> There

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<sup>52</sup> Gail Malmgreen, 'Introduction', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women*, ed. by Gail Malmgreen (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 1-10 (p. 7).

were, however, times when the members felt constrained to protest that their efforts were being overlooked. They obviously felt that any matters to do with the work of female missionaries fell within their purview and hence their concern when the WMMS developed Zenana work. The Auxiliary's agents were under the immediate control of the local superintendent when they went overseas but the Auxiliary tried to ensure that its agents were treated with the respect which it felt was due to them. The Auxiliary was responsive rather than an initiator in that it would send agents only to places where mission stations had already been set up. To some extent it set limits to its own activities early on by deciding to call itself the Ladies' Auxiliary for Female Education. Early on the Auxiliary recognised the need for its agents to learn local languages and insisted that they become proficient by the end of their first year overseas. It also recognised the need to provide training for its agents and this was developed and changed over the period. It raised its profile and the status of its agents but was content to work within the limits set by the WMMS and society generally. It made no attempt, for example, to provide any services for missionary wives.

In the first decade of the 20th century there was increasing pressure to integrate women's societies in the United States into general foreign mission boards because women were seen as taking funds from these boards, plus there was thought to be duplication in administration and promotion.<sup>53</sup> The former charge was never proved and it appeared that women were loyal supporters of the main missionary boards first and their own societies second. Whatever the facts, integration became increasingly the way forward. The Auxiliary ended its existence as a separate body within Methodism when it became the Women's Department of the WMMS in 1927.

### III. Mrs. C. M. Wiseman, Foreign Secretary of the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS 1878-1912

The story of the Women's Auxiliary would be incomplete without more about one of its long-standing members who helped to raise its profile and who had a large share in the way in which its work developed. Caroline Meta Shum was born in Bath in 1834

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<sup>53</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, *All Loves Excelling* (Grand Rapids Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 178.



to what has been described as ‘an old-fashioned Methodist home’<sup>54</sup>. Her father was the organist for 64 years at the New King Street Methodist Chapel as well as being a local councillor so his children would have grown up in a family atmosphere where the idea of public service would have been seen as an accepted way of life. Her mother is said to have been an enthusiastic supporter of foreign missions.<sup>55</sup> One of her sisters married a Methodist minister and when Caroline was twelve she went to live with her in Launceston for some years, although why this happened is not known. She grew up in a family atmosphere where religion was even more important than in many middle-class Victorian families. Nothing is known about the education which she received. Her family would not have been sufficiently wealthy to employ a governess and she is likely to have been educated at home by her mother and elder sisters plus possibly her father. It may be that the extended stay with one of her sisters and her Methodist minister husband in Cornwall was intended to provide her with the education which her family could not afford to buy in Bath. The pastoral duties of a Methodist minister’s wife, with which Caroline would have necessarily become involved, would have influenced her at a very important stage in her development and would have helped to confirm the idea of self sacrifice for the sake of others which she would have already been familiar with in family life in Bath. She is said to have attributed her conversion largely as result of the prayers of the many visitors who came to her father’s house.<sup>56</sup>

Given her background it is not surprising that she should have been attracted initially towards Sunday school work and later on to helping at a Ragged School in Milk Street, Bath. Philanthropic work was the obvious outlet for someone with Caroline’s energy and drive since other openings remained severely limited in the 1850s and 1860s. Teaching or nursing would have been possibilities but were probably at the time not thought to be sufficiently ladylike for those from a middle class background. Assisting her mother in the home and with her philanthropic work prior to marriage would not have been an untypical way of life for women like Caroline. In any event

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<sup>54</sup> Anna M. Hellier, “*Just Nothing*” *Memories of Caroline M. Wiseman and Her Work* (London: Women’s Auxiliary of the WMMS, 1925), p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Lena Tyack, *Caroline Meta Wiseman* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1915), p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.



her involvement with the Ragged School was to become her chief interest in life and where she became closely involved in all activities of the school, including daily visits and supervision of the headmistress.<sup>57</sup> She combined the role of truant officer, where she appears to have been the bane of the life of recalcitrant parents, with that of singing mistress. She is said to have insisted on school uniforms in order to try to conceal the poverty of the pupils. She is also said to have been sympathetic to poor and hungry children but as practical instances of this have not been recorded it is difficult to know what this really meant other than a vague intent to help under privileged children. She later extended her interests to rescue work for homeless girls although again it is not known what form this work took. It would have been a logical follow through to her work with younger girls from poor homes. These activities, although not untypical of someone from her background, show that she had considerable energy and drive from an early age.

Whatever her motives and intentions behind her involvement in the ragged school, there is little doubt that she was wholly committed to the work which seems likely to have occupied a considerable part of her day. The combination of charitable work together with improvement seems to have been what appealed to her. The considerable amount of work involved also seems to have been important for her.

At this stage Caroline's philanthropic work had been very much in the area which was accepted as being women's work, although, by the amount of energy which she put into the work, she had probably done more than what would have been seen as adequate. Her attempts to control truancy at the ragged school showed that she was prepared to stretch the accepted limits for involvement in school work and to be involved in practical work. It is reputed that the Bishop of Bath sought her advice on schools. She appears, in any event, to have built up a reputation in Bath so far as her involvement in schools was concerned to such extent that, when local school boards were inaugurated under the Elementary Education Act of 1870, she was asked to stand and was one of the first women in England to be elected. Under the Education Act women could vote and stand for the Boards. There was no ward system and each

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

voter had as many votes as there were places on the Board. Among other women elected at the same time were Elizabeth Garrett (Anderson) and Emily Davies, founder of the college for women at Hitchin which was later to become Girton College and a strong protagonist for women's education. These two were elected to the London School Board where Elizabeth Garrett headed the poll. However, their attendance record was poor because, it has been suggested, they stood as feminists rather than educationalists.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps surprisingly in a city like Bath which might have been expected to be fairly conservative in its views, two women were elected, that is Caroline Shum and Anne Ashworth, the Quaker niece of Jacob Bright.<sup>59</sup> P. Hollis has suggested that local government was more than just 'practical rate-funded philanthropy', since women were required to seek election, mobilise an electorate, gain the endorsement of political parties and the confidence of local interest groups.<sup>60</sup> She further suggests that local government brought together notions of suffragettes and suffrage, philanthropy and practical Christianity. It is clear in Caroline Shum's case that many of these elements were not present. She appears to have been invited to stand in Bath and her election address is modest and concerned with educational matters. It makes it unlikely that she was particularly concerned with suffrage issues but that she saw the opportunity for employing practical Christianity in improving local schools. It also seems likely that she and others felt that her talents were not being fully used in her involvement with one school. Sitting on the school board did, however, mean that she was much more exposed to the public gaze and moved from the relatively private sphere of being involved in a single school to that of helping to run the school board. What contribution she made to the board is not known but her record in later life makes it unlikely that she kept in the background. The involvement in the school board seems likely to have provided good training for her subsequent role in the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. She would have become used to working in committees, to raising funds and to influencing people, for example.

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<sup>58</sup> Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect - Women in English Local Government 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 87.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 132.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

Caroline Shum served on the Bath School Board from 1871 to 1874 when she married the Rev. Wiseman, a widower, and a General Secretary of the WMMS. She would have been seen as marrying into the innermost WMMS circle. In his younger days he had been a Wesleyan minister in London as well as editor of *The Methodist Recorder*. It was he who introduced his wife to the Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS. The Rev. Wiseman died nine months after their marriage and Mrs. Wiseman was then able to devote the rest of her life to the work of the Auxiliary. She had her own house so presumably she had been left comfortably off. It would have been possible for her to try to seek election to the London School Board but getting elected for someone who was new to London and who did not move in the circles which might have helped to nominate her would have been difficult. It would have meant adopting a much higher profile than in Bath. The Women's Auxiliary appears to have provided her with a sufficient challenge for her energies so that she did not seek further public office. Given that, through her family and marriage, she was firmly integrated into Methodist circles, it was unlikely that she would have wanted to be involved with those who were seeking the advancement of women's activities in society. It is likely that she was very traditional in her outlook, seeking not to advance the boundaries confining women but to make the most use of what was considered suitable at the time for them, for example in her school work in Bath. Her work for the Women's Auxiliary would also confirm this. Some of her attitudes also confirm this. She was, for example, against travelling on Sundays and was a member of the Lord's Day Observance Society. In addition to her work with the Women's Auxiliary, she ran Bible classes at her home for working girls.

Mrs. Wiseman joined the Auxiliary in 1874 and was appointed the Foreign Secretary in 1876. She was responsible for all the correspondence with the female agents whom the Auxiliary sent abroad. She was in a strong position to influence the decisions of the Auxiliary since she was said to have a marvellous grasp of detail.<sup>61</sup> The minutes of the Women's Auxiliary do not reveal details of what individuals contributed to the discussions at the meetings but, given that Mrs. Wiseman served on

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<sup>61</sup> Anna M. Hellier, "*Just Nothing*" *Memories of Caroline M Wiseman and Her Work* (London: Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS, 1925), p. 37.

the Auxiliary for nearly 30 years, she would have been in a strong position to influence the discussions. She is reputed to have worked from 8.30 in the morning to midnight on behalf of the Auxiliary.<sup>62</sup> Possibly that may be an exaggeration by her biographer and friend, Anna Hellier, but it indicates that much of her life was devoted to the Auxiliary. She travelled extensively in the British Isles. In 1901, for example, she addressed 64 meetings and probably around 1500 meetings in total in her lifetime. In 1888 she went to India and Ceylon to visit the female agents supported by the Women's Auxiliary. Her extensive itinerary provided her with ample information to take on many speaking engagements on her return about the work that the Wesleyans were doing in India and Ceylon. It had been accepted that women undertaking public speaking engagements normally spoke to female audiences only and this convention was only just beginning to change at this time. Mrs. Wiseman is said to have been unhappy about men attending her meetings but she eventually accepted this. In 1902 she made a further extensive visit to India and China. Visits abroad by one of the General Secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society were a regular part of their duties and were eagerly awaited by the resident missionaries. They were anxious to show the work that they were doing and to support the information which was required to be sent regularly to the WMMS. It was unprecedented for a woman to make such tours so it could be argued that she had received the honorary status of a man. Apart from her Auxiliary work, as important as that was to her, she had little else to keep her at home so she may have pressed for the visit. Although Mrs. Wiseman's visits were done under the auspices of the Auxiliary which was to a large extent autonomous, it would have been impossible for these to proceed without the blessing of the WMMS.

Besides virtually running the Women's Auxiliary, Mrs. Wiseman was closely involved in selecting candidates for the Auxiliary to send abroad. The candidates considered promising were invited to stay with her for a period, sometimes for as long as a week. They were given various tasks, such as doing the accounts, visiting the sick or playing the harmonium. It is said that when they were not so occupied, Mrs. Wiseman observed what books they read and what occupations they found for

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

themselves.<sup>63</sup> Some candidates might have found this off-putting. Whilst numbers of potential female missionaries remained small, although they never became particularly high, this method was practical. In 1898 Mrs. Wiseman proposed that a Training Home should be set up in London for six workers under the supervision of a lady superintendent, although this was not established until much later. She played a major role in the 50th Jubilee Celebrations of the Women's Auxiliary of 1908 which did a great deal to raise the profile of the Women's Auxiliary. In addition to raising a special fund of £26,000, a major exhibition of the Auxiliary's work was held in the Portman Rooms which was opened by HRH Princess Alexander of Teck, and whom Mrs. Wiseman conducted around the exhibition. As part of the celebrations, a portrait of Mrs. Wiseman was commissioned and later placed with the paintings of other Methodist worthies at the WMMS Mission House. Her portrait is reproduced in Anna Hellier's book. £5,000 from the Jubilee funds was used to start a pension fund for female missionaries and Mrs. Wiseman is thought to have drafted the scheme<sup>64</sup>. She was also very active in fund-raising. For example in 1899 she organised the Children's Famine Fund in India.<sup>65</sup> She was particularly good at clearing the deficits which the Women's Auxiliary frequently had at the end of the year. In 1910 she raised £1,143 to clear the debt from the previous year, around 5% of the income of the Women's Auxiliary.<sup>66</sup> She combined femininity with a steely determination, a formidable combination to resist.

The two biographies of Mrs. Wiseman contain little objective criticism of her. There are comments that some found her too severe and self-assertive and that she was too outspoken for some. Under an exterior of great feminine charm she had an iron will which spared neither herself nor others. It helped that she was well turned out and handsome, according to her portrait. She went to great lengths to emphasise her femininity, for example spending time with her step grandchildren and on her flower growing at her home. She was a person of considerable energy which she used in the cause of the Auxiliary. She showed that widows had a contribution to make to

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

<sup>64</sup> Lena Tyack, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>65</sup> *WMMS Reports 1896* Women's Auxiliary Report p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> *WMMS Reports 1910* Work for Women p. 247.

missionary work. She was the inspiration behind much of its development whilst she was foreign secretary. In her procedure for assessing candidates she was concerned not just that they should be sufficiently motivated for religious reasons but that they should also have practical skills and the ability to adjust to the areas where they were to be sent. She was concerned to raise the profile of the Auxiliary as her involvement in the Jubilee celebrations showed. She was happy to take an active and very public role in promoting the Auxiliary but it is clear that she did this very much within the boundaries set by the WMMS. Her travels within the British Isles involved speaking at meetings of women only and it was only reluctantly that she was prepared to tolerate men attending. Her two extensive visits to India, Ceylon and China where most of the Auxiliary's agents were sent, mostly involved visiting the female agents. The inclusion of her portrait at Mission House and the purchase of a property paid for by male missionaries in the Pulney Hills for workers in South India and Ceylon to be known as Wiseman Cottage shows the extent to which her talents were recognised beyond the Auxiliary.<sup>67</sup> A hospital at Welimade was also named after her. Jane Lewis has suggested that the philanthropic world was an acceptable and comfortable place for women and that exceptional women could even carve out a small empire of their own.<sup>68</sup> Mrs. Wiseman did this.

Mrs. Wiseman's main achievement was to steer a course which promoted the activities of the Women's Auxiliary but which did not bring it into conflict with the WMMS. She achieved much greater autonomy for the Auxiliary by raising its profile and by ensuring that for the most part it had a sound financial footing. These were significant achievements but essentially they consolidated the status quo.

#### IV The Training and Selection of Female Agents by the Women's Auxiliary and the CMS

Prior to the large expansion of numbers of single female missionaries in the last two decades of the 19th century, applications could be dealt with on an ad hoc basis without the need for a formal procedure. This was especially the case with the CMS in

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<sup>67</sup> *WMMS Reports 1899* The Women's Auxiliary p. 134.

<sup>68</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), p. 303.

sending out its agents to Sierra Leone, for example to the Annie Walsh Memorial School which never employed more than three European teachers at any one time, often less. In the 1880s the number of applicants was such that a formal procedure had to be set up with training institutions organised. The Auxiliary, although more committed to the sending out of female agents from its inauguration in 1858, adopted a similar ad hoc approach. Its candidates were often recommended by a member of the Auxiliary, although such an approach must have made it difficult to reject someone recommended by an Auxiliary member. The numbers applying were such that each candidate could be interviewed at a meeting of the Auxiliary. This personal touch would have given a very real feeling to the members that they were closely involved in promoting the work of conversion

The Auxiliary was concerned from the start about the standard of education of their candidates. Some were rejected outright since it was not considered sufficient to be a Wesleyan and to feel the call to missionary work. This call took many forms (see Chapter I) and the Auxiliary had to be satisfied that the candidate was suitable for the post and for the right reasons. Some were considered to need further training either for a few months but sometimes for one or two years, depending on what the Auxiliary saw as the candidate's need. In the early years of the Auxiliary's existence, it used the Westminster Normal Training College for its candidates. The cost was £30-35 a year, subsequently reduced to £26 after pleas by the Auxiliary. This meant that the Auxiliary was investing considerable sums to ensure that its candidates were adequately prepared. Their training was carefully monitored and at times candidates were rejected for not making sufficient progress. From 1873 onwards as applications increased, candidates were required to send a photograph before they could be considered. This gave the Auxiliary an opportunity to reject those whose photographs did not project the correct lady-like appearance, although this was never stated as the reason for rejection. Age was also important; ideally candidates had to be under 30 years of age. Given the difficult climates of some of the countries where the candidates could expect to serve this was not unreasonable. After using the Westminster Normal Training College for some years, the Auxiliary decided to use Southlands, a Wesleyan training college in Battersea. This was relatively lavish,



offering tennis courts, a croquet lawn, two pianos and a harmonium.<sup>69</sup> In 1878 the Auxiliary decided to accept certificated teachers only. In 1886 all candidates were expected to pass an examination similar to that taken by students at Southlands. This included scriptural knowledge, English grammar, history, geography, arithmetic and domestic economy. In 1901 the examination was revised as it was felt that there had been too much concentration on school work. In 1910 an additional question was added on candidates' attitudes on presenting their religion to those who already had a religion of their own.<sup>70</sup> It is not clear what answer was expected but was presumably mainly related to the religions found in India such as Islam and Hinduism rather than traditional African religions which would have been seen as 'pagan beliefs'.

Candidates often spent some time at the home of one of the Auxiliary members and her report on the candidate was considered important. This eventually became impractical and in 1913 a house was taken in Highgate to be used as a hostel for candidates. After a short stay there, candidates were examined by the Auxiliary's medical officer and then interviewed by the Auxiliary. If the candidate did not meet the health requirements then there was no point in continuing with the application. New rules agreed in 1912 required a candidate to inform her minister and to provide a reference from him and also to inform her medical attendant of her application. The examinations were also revised to include religious and secular knowledge, including English grammar, geography, history and arithmetic, although medical candidates were exempt. In 1916 a Candidates' Training Fund was set up to pay for candidates to train at the Kingsmead or Carey Hall missionary colleges at Selly Oak, Birmingham. Candidates needed to spend one or two years there. The debate continued on what training female agents should receive. Male missionaries had three years' training but they were then eligible for ordination. An article in *Women's Work* argued that the training of women had to keep pace with that of men or 'our work will not abide'.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless this never became the case.

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<sup>69</sup> Dina M. Copelmann, op. cit., p.139.

<sup>70</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 9 *Minutes of the Meeting* 5 July 1910, p.222

<sup>71</sup> Miss Paget, 'Our Women Missionaries and Special Training', *Women's Work on the Mission Field* October 1917 p. 283.



By the end of the century female agents were required to pass oral and written examinations in the language spoken at their station to take place one year after their arrival.<sup>72</sup> It is not clear how rigorous this examination was or what importance it was given or whether it was the same as the examination which the male missionaries took. There are few references in the minutes about pass rates and no one was sent home for not passing. The insistence on learning local languages shows the concern of the Auxiliary that its agents should not have to rely on interpreters when teaching in schools or visiting. It would perhaps be too strong to suggest that this represents a move away from ethnocentrism but it reflects an attitude which shows some appreciation of the value of local languages. The CMS similarly recognised the need to learn the local language of the place where missionaries were stationed and it too introduced language examinations. Miss Taylor in instructions given to her in February 1893 was told to learn the local language and understand local habits.<sup>73</sup> Whether the female missionaries found the language examinations difficult or not, the requirements were lowered for them in 1901 compared with those for men; for example women were required to translate 150 pages from the vernacular to English, men 300 pages.<sup>74</sup>

The CMS considered that its early female missionaries needed no training. They were described as 'Christian women of experience' and therefore no training was needed before going overseas.<sup>75</sup> The CMS had adopted a similar attitude to its early male missionaries 'as if the Lord would guide and provide for the missionary so that he did not need much mundane preparation'. In Sierra Leone the CMS provided teachers for the Annie Walsh Memorial School (see Chapter IV) and these were invariably single women. The increase in the number of women offering themselves for missionary work meant that the CMS had to look more carefully at the way in which it selected female candidates and provided training for them. Reporting to the Candidates'

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<sup>72</sup> WMMS Archives Women's Work Collection Women's Auxiliary Minute Book 7 *Minutes of the Women's Auxiliary* 14 February 1899, p.231.

<sup>73</sup> CMS Archives G3 A3 L4 CMS Secretaries to Miss Mary Taylor 9 February 1893

<sup>74</sup> George Thomas Basden, *Edith Warner of the Niger* (London: Seeling Service & Co., 1927), p. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, 4 vols London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), III p. 371.

Committee of the CMS a Ladies' Candidates' Committee was set up whose members were mostly women and this dealt mainly with the appointment and location of single female missionaries. It has been suggested that in selecting candidates there was more emphasis on outward qualities, rather than the inner state, on doing rather than being.<sup>76</sup> The Ladies' Committee considered around 80-110 applications a year of which around half were accepted. Of those declined just under half were rejected on medical grounds. After a medical examination, the applicants were graded from A1 (exceptionally good candidates) to O (declined).<sup>77</sup> Class III were below average and could be used in carefully selected posts only, probably ruling them out for service in Africa. References were required from six referees and the candidates had to submit replies to a questionnaire as well as attend for an interview. Five people, a mixture of men and women, usually interviewed the candidate and provided a recommendation for the committee. The questions used in 1909 contained questions about the church attended, the educational standard reached and the preparation made for missionary work. Candidates were also required to explain the nature of atonement, provide a short account of a mission or missionary and to explain what they knew about non-Christian beliefs. Unfortunately the replies given by the candidates have not survived. The reasons for declining candidates are not stated in the minutes, unless on medical grounds. Some candidates were asked to discuss their application further with the Secretary of the Committee and then to re-submit their application. Many of the candidates were living at home and appeared to have no paid occupation so missionary work would not only have provided them with training but also with guaranteed work on successful completion of the course. The CMS Candidates' Committee had to approve the decision of Ladies' Committee regarding candidates which it invariably did.

Formal training for CMS male missionaries had started in 1825 in Islington. The syllabus was as follows: Greek and Latin classics, composition of Latin prose, the Greek and Latin Fathers, Greek and possibly Hebrew prose and oriental tongues, arithmetic, geography, natural philosophy and history plus divinity (including logic,

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<sup>76</sup> S. C. Potter, 'The Social Origins and Recruitment of English Protestant Missionaries in the 19th Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1984), p. 234.

<sup>77</sup> CMS Archives C/C1/1 Minutes of Candidates' Committee 5 June 1906

metaphysics, philology and moral philosophy).<sup>78</sup> If that was not enough, but then the training did last three years, medicine, botany, chemistry and biology were to be learnt plus some useful mechanical arts. A preparatory institute for men was started at Reading in 1869, moved to Clapham in 1889 and later to Blackheath. Training by the CMS for female missionaries did not start until 1891 when the Highbury Training Home was opened under the Misses Cates who offered their services free. Prior to this candidates had to have the level of education of a good governess.<sup>79</sup> Highbury was intended for young women who 'through lack of means or adequate educational advantage or from other causes, are ineligible for admission to The Willows or similar institutions'.<sup>80</sup> The Willows was a training home of the Mildmay Institutions and the CMS sent some of its candidates there and some to The Olives which had been started in 1894 by Mrs. Bracewell. The Deaconess House at Great Yarmouth was also used for older ladies requiring practical experience in mission work as well as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Preliminary Testing and Training Home at Chelsea. In 1909 the Ladies' Candidates' Committee noted that there were at least four other colleges providing missionary training for women:- the SPG Hostel at Wandsworth, the Winchester Diocesan Training Home, the United Free Church of Scotland (Miss Small) and Doric Lodge.<sup>81</sup> In 1901 the CMS opened a training home for women candidates in Bermondsey to provide medical and missionary training. Ladies went to The Willows or The Olives whereas working class women were trained at Highbury and Bermondsey.<sup>82</sup> The CMS had to pay for the women trained at the last two places whereas those who went to the other two would be expected to meet at least part of the cost themselves.

In addition a hostel for female medical and educational students opened in June 1900 but closed in 1907 as a result of CMS retrenchment. As privately run centres, both The Willows and The Olives were outside the direct control of the CMS although it

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<sup>78</sup> S. C. Potter, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>79</sup> J. S. Isherwood, 'An Analysis of the Role of Single Women in the Work of the Church Missionary Society 1804-1904 in West Africa, India and China' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Manchester, 1979), p. xviii.

<sup>80</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), III, p. 672.

<sup>81</sup> CMS Archives C/C1/1 Minutes of Candidates' Committee 5 May 1909.

<sup>82</sup> J. R. Isherwood, op. cit., p. 248.

provided many of the students. In 1904 the Ladies' Candidates' Committee considered a report on the Highbury Training Home which recommended that it should continue as a preparatory institution but that it should have a leavening of other candidates and that a senior class should be started since The Willows and The Olives could not accommodate all the CMS candidates. The Highbury curriculum was to be revised and to include the study of a foreign language, singing and recreational reading. The candidates would also take part in local mothers' meetings and visitations. After one year at Highbury candidates would then go to The Willows or The Olives for a further year.

In 1907 a committee was appointed by the main Candidates' Committee and the Ladies' Candidates' Committee to consider the training of women. This move had been prompted by a conference of women missionaries held at Littlehampton in May 1906. Apart from considering the recommendations from this conference, the committee had interviewed the heads of The Willows, The Olives, the Highbury Training Home and Bermondsey Training Home as well as looking at what happened at other missionary training homes for women. The idea of the CMS creating a Women's Training Institution was considered but rejected as being impractical at that moment in time, probably because the CMS was undergoing retrenchment. The recommendations included less time to be spent on visiting and more on study with a central location where lectures could be given. Highbury was to be used as a hostel only, presumably having outlived its original purpose of providing education for the more deprived applicants. Termly examinations and two year courses were to be introduced together with lectures on medical subjects, teaching and theology. It is not clear how far these recommendations were followed but medical lectures were given and candidates were required to attend Bethnal Green Hospital (following the closure of Bermondsey) for two days and one evening a week. This reflected the increased importance placed on medical work in the missions which provided an example of practical religion. It was accepted that women could preach to patients and helped to extend what they could or could not do at the mission station.<sup>83</sup> Training in medicine, however elementary, meant that the single missionaries learnt another skill. The

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 101.

Highbury Home reversed its role and became akin to a graduate institution where those of a sufficiently high educational standard and not needing to go to The Willows or The Olives could study. Missionaries on furlough could also stay at Highbury. The principal there, Mrs. Thornton, arranged lectures on the Old and New Testaments, development of religious apologetics, account keeping and phonetics. The residents also attended The Willows for church history, comparative religion, animism and teaching. Other lectures included Indian sociology and Islam in India, reflecting that the most likely destination for most female candidates was India. Practical work was undertaken in local parishes and at the Victoria Park dispensary and the Islington medical mission.

As part of the preparation for missionary work, the Home Preparation Union was formed in 1897 to provide help in study and practical Christian work for some three to four years before a candidate, male or female, could be considered for missionary work. Members of the Union were provided with books and elementary study classes were arranged. The study board of the Union consisted of members of the Candidates' Committee, the Ladies' Candidates' Committee and the Education Committee of the CMS. The scheme was revised in 1911. The curriculum then included Bible study, church history, doctrine, apologetics and missionary studies, especially non-Christian religions. Members were supposed to study for at least six hours a week. Membership of the Union was open to those between the ages of 17 and 30 years and cost one shilling a week. The women studying in 1911 included 69 teachers, 19 students, 31 nurses, 38 clerks and shop assistants, and 31 domestic servants and those of 'the factory class'. Those in the last category would have found it difficult to study with the Union, bearing in mind the number of hours of study per week and the cost and this is reflected in the fact that the female participants were mostly middle class.

Single female missionaries could never hope to be given the extended training which male missionaries received. The latter were after all to be ordained and they had to be the equal of those entering the church by more conventional routes; perhaps they had to be even better. In any case it would have been doubtful whether women would

have been considered equal to the considerable amount of studying which men undertook. Even in languages where women might have been considered to have a natural advantage, the standards in examinations were lowered for them. Their lower standard of training had the result that it made it more difficult for them to be seen by men as equals in missionary work. The training also helped to preserve the separate spheres ideology. The Women's Auxiliary was mostly concerned with providing female teachers so they had a specific role which it would have been difficult to change, for example to undertake evangelisation. The CMS female missionaries, in West Africa at least, also had a primary role as teachers but towards the end of the 19th century they began to expand this role with itineration and evangelisation and the changes in training began to reflect this increased role. Both the Auxiliary and the CMS placed increasing importance on their missionaries learning local languages.

In the CMS the single female missionaries were looked after by a Ladies' Candidates' Committee. Although its decisions were rarely challenged, it was in an inferior role to the overall Candidates' Committee. The Ladies' Committee did not have to provide its funding, always a time consuming process for the WMMS Auxiliary. In theory it had a free hand in deciding where its agents were sent but this was somewhat illusory since they had to be under the supervision of a local minister who was prepared to accept them. The Auxiliary also felt that its role was undervalued, possibly because it was at arms' length from the WMMS. Its training facilities were never as comprehensive as those of the CMS for women, even though it had been accepting single women from its inauguration in 1858. In promoting the use of single female agents the Auxiliary was anticipating the increase in the number of female missionaries in the last two decades of the 19th century. There were many reasons for this increase (see Chapter I) but the Auxiliary showed that single women had a role to play in a missionary team. The CMS had provided single teachers at the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone since its inauguration in 1845 and they provided a further example of what single women could do.

Both the Auxiliary and the CMS saw the need to change their training and the examinations they set to reflect the changing needs of mission work. Both accepted

the value of learning the local languages and introduced appropriate examinations. Both introduced the 19th century equivalent of distance learning so that candidates would have a better understanding of what mission work involved and would be better prepared for the training which they would have to undertake. Training in medical work was also given by the CMS which provided a further way of offering practical religion and also expanded the range of skills which single female missionaries offered. The training given helped to promote the idea of the single female missionary as a professional, who is paid for her work, subject to a careful procedure before entry and being given a rigorous training.

## V Conclusions

The infrastructure which developed in Great Britain to support missionaries was no less an important part of the missionary effort than the actual act of going overseas, which for many was not possible. Joining a missionary society gave many the opportunity to feel that they were contributing almost as much as those in the field. They became surrogate missionaries and women took readily to this role. As in other philanthropic work, they became adept at raising funds through a variety of ingenious ways. The Women's Auxiliary showed that women could run an effective organisation and were not just good at providing a supporting role for the male dominated missionary societies. It provided a very cost effective organisation, not least because the resources available to it were severely constrained but because female agents cost less than men. There was less need for an elaborate hierarchy to look after the activities because the middle class women involved, particularly where they were widows, could find time to run the Auxiliary on a voluntary basis. It is clear that some women welcomed this opportunity. To some extent the Auxiliary was a victim of its own success. It was seen as an efficient provider of the role to which it limited itself, basically that of providing teachers which might have been considered to imbalance the missionary work. When it sought to expand its role, for example to Zenana work, it had to fight a hard battle with the WMMS. It did not try to extend the work of its female agents to evangelization and itineration nor to medical work which became increasingly important at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Its efforts were concentrated on India so that it ignored some of the



opportunities which were available in Africa. The reasons for this were never explicitly stated. However, it has been suggested that so far as missionary work was concerned in the first three quarters of the 19th century 'Africa received the leftovers, a sort of celestial fodder'.<sup>84</sup> The male missionaries were men of humble origin who often would not have been accepted for the home ministry. This gave the impression that Africa was second best and this feeling together with the trying climate of West Africa may have made the Auxiliary reluctant to send its female agents there. The WMMS, which had overall responsibility for the Wesleyan missionary effort, had to find other ways to provide for West Africa. The Auxiliary provided no support for missionary wives or fiancées but it could be argued that this was because they were outside the Auxiliary's remit since they and their husbands were the responsibility of the WMMS.

The training of single female agents developed from an initial acceptance that women's charitable work at home provided sufficient training for work overseas or that a teaching qualification was sufficient. Women were then increasingly required to undertake training and examinations to prove that they had the ability to undertake missionary work. Such training and facilities as came to be provided were entirely separate from those of men and were never the equivalent to those which men were given. The lingering thought persisted that women's disposition towards caring and self-sacrifice made training seem almost superfluous. As the knowledge of local languages came to be recognised as an essential part of the missionary effort, so women were required to pass the appropriate examinations and there was some move towards similar training for the male and female missionaries.

Many women in the 19th century were inspired by religion towards philanthropy, for example Octavia Hill and Mary Ward.<sup>85</sup> A belief in religious truth and in the

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<sup>84</sup> Andrew F. Walls, 'British Missions', in *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era 1880-1920*, Torben Christensen & William R. Hutchison, eds (Aarhus: Aros, Denmark, 1982), pp. 159-177 (p. 160).

<sup>85</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991,) p. 196.



importance of the idea of the conscious pursuit of the good life were themes transcending individualism.<sup>86</sup> Missionary work at home can be seen as a part of this. The work of those who remained at home and joined the missionary societies there instead of volunteering to go overseas was an essential part of the missionary effort without which the missionary movement would have foundered. It required a band of sympathetic persons to provide the funds and the support for missionaries. Women were an indispensable part of this effort.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 280.

### **Chapter III Women's Work in the West African Missionary Field**

#### **'Them women be best man for mission'<sup>1</sup>**

##### I Introduction

That women were the best men for missions was a view expressed by Henry (or Henny) Cobham, the chief of Cobham town in Old Calabar, on the death of Mrs. Louisa Anderson in 1882. She had served, as a missionary wife, with the mission of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland at Old Calabar for 34 years. Other tributes at her death described her as 'nurse, matron, friend, adviser and hostess'.<sup>2</sup> She was known, apparently as 'the silent woman' but 'her recorded deeds are eloquent of self-sacrifice'.<sup>3</sup> Such tributes indicate the wide range of skills and qualities of the female missionary. The work of women missionaries, whether as wives, widows or single female agents, has continued to attract interest from those concerned with the way in which such women re-negotiated their role in society and the implications for society as a whole. West Africa attracted not only women like Mrs. Anderson who went quietly about their tasks but others such as Hannah Kilham and Mary Slessor who have provided much of the impetus for recent research. Alison Twells, for example, has written extensively on Hannah Kilham who was not only involved with missionary work in Sierra Leone in the early part of the 19th century but also with philanthropic work in Sheffield, an example that refutes the argument sometimes levied against the missionaries that their activities overseas were at the expense of problems at home.<sup>4</sup> Mary Slessor, about whom many books and articles have been written since her death in 1915, continues to be the source for further research. J. H. Proctor, for example, has written recently about her dual role as missionary and court official.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Marwick, *William and Louisa Anderson* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1897), p. 591.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 584.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Twells, 'So Distant and Wild a Scene': language, domesticity and difference in Hannah Kilham's writing from West Africa, 1822-32', *Women's History Review*, 4:3 (1995), 301-318.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Proctor, 'Serving God and the Empire: Mary Slessor in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1876-1915', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 30:1 (2000), 45-61.

Apart from the research on Hannah Kilham and Mary Slessor and, to a more limited extent on Anna Hinderer, there has been little interest in the work which women missionaries undertook in West Africa in the 19th century. Most of those who went there have so far remained in obscurity. They did not achieve the stature of Hannah Kilham or Mary Slessor but were an important part of the missionary effort in West Africa. They were not seeking to extend the boundaries of their work in any obvious ways but achieved much through their work with African women and children which gave them an increased status within the missionary community. Although they could never become ordained and probably such thoughts were never in their minds, they were able towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century to extend their role to evangelisation and preaching, a necessary preliminary step towards the advancement of women in the church. Much of their work involved teaching and later on providing medical facilities. This chapter emphasises the contribution of such women whilst also trying to assess how far the women like Mary Slessor left a lasting mark on missions.

The missionary societies discussed in this chapter are the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the Basel Mission Society, the Qua Iboe Missionary Society of Belfast and the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission. All of these societies shared a common evangelical stance although their traditions varied. Early Victorian Scottish Presbyterianism, for example, had emphasised self-help and voluntary philanthropy although attitudes softened in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> Missionary activity was part of this philanthropy and women had been involved from the start.

It would be inconceivable to look at the work of women missionaries in West Africa without a discussion of outstanding personalities such as Hannah Kilham, Mary Slessor and Anna Hinderer. How far such women have made a lasting contribution or whether they were what might be termed aberrations which the missions suffered is a moot point discussed later on. To some extent, however, they have obscured the work

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<sup>6</sup> This comment is drawn from the Open University's course on Religion in Victorian Britain A331 Study Guide 1.

of lesser beings who in individual effort might seem less worthy of consideration but overall might be thought to have contributed greatly to missionary work. The more famous women in missionary history can also be seen as a reproach to other women who have not scaled such heights. June Purvis has suggested that the purpose of the women worthies' tradition is to reveal the range of women's capacity from what some women have done to what 'all could do if given the chance and the education'.<sup>7</sup> The approach used here is a holistic one in that a systematic attempt is made to take an overall view of all the work which women performed in the West African missions whether as wives, widows or single agents. A few fell in to all three categories at different times. Hannah Kilham, Anna Hinderer and Mary Slessor between them represented all three types, being respectively a widow, a wife and a single female agent.

Throughout the 19th century being a missionary, whether male or female, was a risky business. Thoughts that death through disease or murder might be the end result could never have been far from the minds of those considering whether to volunteer for service with one or other of the many missionary societies. Such risks gave a certain satisfaction. Thoughts about death were particularly apposite for those going to West Africa where the white man's grave was also the white woman's. The deaths were seen by the mission societies as providing the black man with spiritual life. This reflection invited comparisons with the death of Jesus on the cross for the salvation of mankind and provided comfort for those going to Africa. The heading of one chapter in Stock's *History of the CMS* is 'Sierra Leone: The White Man's Grave; the Black Man's Life'.<sup>8</sup> Although advances in medicine in the second half of the century meant that a posting to West Africa was less to be feared, deaths of both male and female missionaries from disease remained common. Despite the fact that women were seen as the frailer sex, there is no indication that those who went to West Africa were more likely to succumb to disease than their male counterparts, although the position is less clear because of deaths in confinement. The Hut Tax uprisings in Sierra Leone in 1897 in which a CMS missionary and five missionaries of the Church of the United

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<sup>7</sup> June Purvis, ed., *Women's History in Britain 1850-1945* (London: UCL Press, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), I pp. 156-173.

Brethren in Christ (including four women) were killed, provided a reminder that missionaries, often located in isolated spots, were vulnerable at times of trouble. West Africa was not alone in this as is shown by the murder of seven women missionaries in China by the 'Vegetarians' in 1895, the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 in which 180 missionaries died and the murder of Bishop Hannington in Uganda in 1895.<sup>9</sup> The thought of death whilst serving the cause of God was seen as a sure way to be with the apostles and martyrs of the church, thus 'Dead missionaries were martyrs and live missionaries were heroes'.<sup>10</sup> This was presumably no less true for women than for men. Martyrs, too, were good for bringing money to the missionary societies. Where women were martyred there was even more opportunity for publicity. The popular press carried stories of the adventures of missionary women who by dying gained gratification as well as a chance to serve God.<sup>11</sup>

Women had two main ways of serving overseas in the missionary cause. They could marry a missionary and hope to accompany him to his posting or they could volunteer to serve as a single missionary, although this latter option was very limited until the last two decades of the 19th century. Women had been asking to go out as missionaries almost as soon as the societies were established but their offers were declined. The CMS decided that it was unwilling to send unmarried women abroad except as sisters accompanying or joining their brothers. In 1820 the first two female missionaries were sent to Sierra Leone as schoolmistresses, one of them accompanying her brother. Between 1820 and 1859 the CMS sent out 53 single women missionaries. Of these, seventeen went to West Africa, mostly to serve as teachers. Although there were a number of calls for the CMS to use more women candidates, it decided in 1863 that they should not be used except in special circumstances. The trickle of single women sent out by the CMS continued until 1887 when, at the urging of a Bishop Parker, the CMS agreed to recruit three women missionaries for East Africa. The response to the advertisement in the *CM Intelligencer* was immediate and three ladies sailed in July 1887. This appears to have been the start of single women being involved significantly with the CMS.

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<sup>9</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, *Women in the Mission Field* (London: Ibsister & Co., 1895), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Alan Craig Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1965), p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 31.

Between 1887 and 1894 it recruited 214 women and in 1893 employed 134 single women missionaries compared with 15 ten years earlier.<sup>12</sup> The CMS also took on more male missionaries in the same period but the increase in their numbers was nothing like as much as for female missionaries. In addition the Colonial Church Missionary Societies sent out a small number of women.<sup>13</sup>

The Basel Mission Society, was well established in the Gold Coast by 1858 with 18 missionaries, 9 wives and 3 single female missionaries. By 1879 numbers had expanded to 34 missionaries, 20 missionary wives and 15 single females employed as teachers.<sup>14</sup> The WMMS also had a sizeable presence. There is less information available about the numbers of Catholic missionaries in West Africa, particularly Catholic sisters. Within the whole of West Africa, Catholic missions had a major presence. Information for 1913 gives the number of priests at 497 and the number of sisters at 339 but most of these would have been stationed in French West Africa.<sup>15</sup> There are passing references in the CMS and WMMS missionary correspondence to a Catholic secondary school for girls in Freetown, Sierra Leone which was presumably run by Catholic sisters. The first Catholic missionaries arrived in 1843 from Philadelphia but eight out of the ten died within a few weeks.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently a number of Catholic missions were established in the Gold Coast, in areas of what was to become Nigeria, and Sierra Leone by the Lyons Society for African Missions, the Order of the Holy Ghost and the Order of the Sacred Heart of Mary but little detail about their activities has so far come to light. The other missions involved in West Africa, the Qua Iboe society based in Belfast and the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, started work there in 1887 and 1846 respectively. The Qua Iboe Missionary Society was small compared with the others. This meant there was less perceived need for rules and regulations, perhaps leading to greater flexibility but also a cause for disputes when no set procedures were laid down. There is no evidence that the Qua Iboe missionaries were any more or less innovative in their work, particularly so

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<sup>12</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, III p. 706.

<sup>14</sup> Basel Mission *The Basel Missions on the Gold Coast on the First January 1879* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1879), Appendix III.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Henry Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), p. 492.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Beeching, *An Open Path* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p.140.

far as their female missionaries were concerned than other mission societies in West Africa. Although Hannah Kilham was a Quaker, the Society of Friends had an ambivalent attitude towards mission work for much of the 19th century and her work in the Gambia and Sierra Leone was as much a personal one as one supported by the Society of Friends. She also had close contact with the CMS in her work.

West Africa provided opportunities for single women to come out as teachers in the secondary girls' schools which the missionary societies set up. The first such school to be set up was the CMS Female Institution in Freetown, Sierra Leone, later to be renamed the Annie Walsh Memorial School and discussed in Chapter IV. Except for a very short period, the principal was always a single female agent assisted by one or sometimes two others. Other secondary schools for girls in West Africa followed. None of the missionary societies copied the policy in India and set up Zenana type visiting in West Africa to reach women kept in seclusion - a policy which provided a powerful impetus for the employment of female missionaries. There were such women kept in seclusion in West Africa but the numbers involved were nothing like those in India. At the turn of the century the CMS began appointing a few women specifically to carry out evangelising work in West Africa and encouraged its female missionaries (who were mostly teachers) to itinerate, especially during the school holidays, that is to travel about the country evangelising, particularly among women.

A male writer in 1895 suggested that among the reasons for the growth in single women participating in missionary work abroad were more independent activity by women and more belief in society as a whole in women's abilities to organise and to think independently.<sup>17</sup> There was also an acceptance that women too had a duty to evangelise. An additional reason was the barrier to male missionaries in some countries, by which the author was presumably referring to the seclusion of women in places like India and also to some extent in West Africa. Although these reasons are valid, especially the need for women to carry out Zenana visiting in India and Ceylon, the increasing involvement of women in missionary work is more complicated than this. The growth in the education of girls in Britain meant that there was a greater

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<sup>17</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

pool from which would-be missionaries could be drawn. The increasing acceptance of paid work for women made missionary work more attractive, particularly as it bridged the gap between unpaid charity work - a traditional and accepted role for middle-class women - and more conventional paid work. Being accepted for missionary work provided training and at the end, if all went well, a guaranteed job which included the travel and adventure that was otherwise not easily obtainable for those without independent means. Not least it provided opportunities for marriage even if the choice was limited to male missionaries. Some women also found a greater intensity of religiosity overseas. Others were able to obtain much greater levels of responsibility than they were likely to have aspired to at home (this could equally be said about men and possibly even more strongly). Jane Hunter has suggested that the reasons for women becoming involved in missionary work ranged from a divine call to a family death, from marriage to a male missionary to the desire to escape from the constraints of spinsterhood.<sup>18</sup>

From the start of missionary work in West Africa it was accepted that missionaries would be able to take their wives with them where circumstances permitted. Some men were married when they were accepted for missionary service, particularly those who had been trained in Basel or Berlin and who provided many of the recruits to serve the CMS, at least in the early stages of its work in West Africa. Missionaries would be expected to take on speaking engagements during their home leave and this provided an opportunity for them to find a wife. David Hinderer met his future wife, Anna, whilst he was on leave from his work in West Africa, giving talks to raise funds for the CMS mission station in Ibadan. She married him in 1852 and she soon 'rejoiced in the thought of living and dying for Africa'.<sup>19</sup> The missionary societies took a similar attitude to that taken by administrators and traders where it was usual for the husband to go out first and establish a base before his wife joined him. There were strong arguments in favour of marriage, so long as it was to the 'right' sort of person, in that a wife relieved her husband of many domestic duties, so giving him more time to devote to his missionary work. Others have, however, argued the

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<sup>18</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. xv.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Hinderer, *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Haliday, 1873), p. 13.



reverse, that a wife meant less time for evangelisation because the husband spent more time at home.<sup>20</sup> Samuel Bill, who started the Qua Iboe Mission in 1887, was joined by his wife in 1891. She returned home for long periods in Belfast and in his journal for 1902 which he sent to her, he wrote 'Dearest Gracie - you are seldom out of my thoughts. I have no spirit left to do anything'.<sup>21</sup> She was then away for four years.

In general missionaries were expected to remain single whilst they were being trained. The Basel Mission argued that missionaries moved into a higher social status once trained and could then marry more appropriately.<sup>22</sup> Initially it had been the intention that all Basel missionaries should remain single. It has been suggested that this was because unmarried men were cheaper and easier to move around and it was feared that marriage might distract the missionary from his work.<sup>23</sup> This rule was gradually relaxed but usually a suitable bride was found by the central committee of the Basel Mission. In 1886 the Mission drew up an ordinance which set out the attributes which a wife should possess:

Because the wife of a missionary is called not only to share the sacrifices and dangers of mission life with him but also to perform her share of the mission work, it is also necessary to require of her that she possess the physical, spiritual and motivational capabilities appropriate to the Mission calling. The obligation of the Committee is to see that we do not accept wives in the missions who do not possess this capability. Therefore, not only the marriage, but also marriage to the specific person intended by the missionary, depends on the permission of the Committee. This permission will be given only after the Committee has formed a judgement about the qualifications of the intended.<sup>24</sup>

The Committee would duly pronounce as to whether a particular person possessed these qualities. The usual arrangement was for missionaries to ask the Basel Mission to find a wife for them after they had been in the Gold Coast for a while. M. Gaunt, a

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<sup>20</sup> Hugh Alan Craig Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1965), p. 58.

<sup>21</sup> Qua Iboe Missionary Society Archive D 3301/DA/1 Samuel Bill, *Journal for 29 July 1902*.

<sup>22</sup> Jon Miller, *Evangelical Missions and Social Change* (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1994), p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> Line Nyhagen Predelli and Jon Miller, 'Piety and Patriarchy: Contested Gender Regimes in Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Missions', in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* ed. by Mary Taylor Huber & Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 67-111 (p. 76).

<sup>24</sup> Verordnungen über die persönliche Stellung der Missionare, Revidiert 1886 Quoted in Jon Miller, *Evangelical Missions and Social Change* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 56.

female traveller in West Africa, commented that the Basel Mission women were ideal for a place like West Africa, since they could make a home anywhere although she acknowledged that they might be condemned as 'haus-fraus'.<sup>25</sup>

Since the Committee in Basel considered that it had to sanction the marriage of its missionaries, it should in theory not have been difficult for it to control those of its agents who wished to marry African women. The ultimate sanction for disregarding the rules on marriage was dismissal but a number of the missionaries were prepared to take this risk. The rules of the Mission prohibited interracial sexual contact and marriage, a rule followed by other missionary societies in West Africa if not so explicitly stated. The most famous example of defying the regulation is that of Johannes Zimmerman, a white missionary, who married Catherine Mulgrave. She was one of forty-two West Indian Christians who had come to Akropong on the Gold Coast in 1842 as part of the Basel Mission. She had married George Thompson, the first African to be educated in the Basel Missionary Seminary. It has been suggested that by establishing a prominent black Christian family the Thompsons helped to serve the aims of the Basel Mission.<sup>26</sup> Thompson was expelled a few years later from the Mission on the grounds of adultery and his wife subsequently divorced him. In 1856 she wrote to Basel explaining that she had parted from her husband after 'his long ill behaviour'.<sup>27</sup> She and the missionary Zimmerman later married without permission. Zimmerman explained in a letter of June 1851 why he had married and said that he was ready to make Africa his home, acknowledging that it would not be possible to take his wife to Europe. Both he and his wife were highly thought of by the Mission and the marriage was grudgingly agreed to, although it was confirmed that he could not bring his wife to Europe. The marriage was not seen as setting a precedent. There are some grounds for thinking that the Basel missionaries were encouraged, privately if not officially, to find a husband for her rather than risk losing her services to the Mission. In later years two missionary marriages to women of

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Gaunt, *Alone in West Africa* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), p.193 and p. 225.

<sup>26</sup> Line Nyhagen Predelli and Jon Miller, op. cit., (p. 84).

<sup>27</sup> Basel Mission Archives Africa D.1 Catherine Mulgrave to Inspektor Josenhans 18 February 1856.

mixed race were tolerated whilst two other missionaries who married 'simple village girls' were expelled.<sup>28</sup>

The CMS changed and adapted its regulations on the marriage of missionaries over the years. In theory those who were trained at the expense of the CMS were required to go out and remain unmarried for one year but this requirement was often not enforced except for India and Ceylon.<sup>29</sup> Those, such as graduates, who had not been a charge on the CMS, were free to marry as they wished. These rules were revised in 1889 and required all missionaries to serve for three years before marrying but the CMS could waive this requirement, particularly for men over twenty-eight years of age. In the minutes the CMS recorded 'the great value of the services which the missionary's wife ... has rendered'.<sup>30</sup> The permission of the local missionaries also had to be obtained and their opinion would have been important when the CMS made its decision.

In 1825 the Rev. Metzger of the CMS was refused permission to marry by the local missionaries when he sought to marry Mary Robinson, the daughter of a German who spoke 'English well and Sherboro fluently'. He described her as a light mulatto, nearly as white as a European female.<sup>31</sup> He eventually married Mary Hickson, daughter of a European trader who may well also have been a mulatto but whose 'humility, modesty and propriety of conduct' recommended her to the local missionaries.

The WMMS sent out its missionaries on probation and they were not expected to marry until this was completed which was often a period of at least four years depending on how quickly they passed their examinations and other tests such as delivering a sermon. The Rev. Wall of the WMMS told the missionary committee in 1838 how they could find out about his fiancée's piety and 'If the Committee is not

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<sup>28</sup> Line Nyhagen & Jon Miller, *op. cit.*, (p. 85).

<sup>29</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, III p. 355.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p. 356.

<sup>31</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M3 Rev. G. W. E. Metzger to CMS Secretary 1824 25 May 1825.

happy with this choice, then there will be no ill-feeling on either side'.<sup>32</sup> Some missionaries set such high standards that they apparently found it impossible to marry. The Rev. Berry writing in 1863 maintained that he '... had not yet met a lady possessing that amount of piety, prudence and zeal which is indispensable to the wife of a Wesleyan Methodist missionary'.<sup>33</sup> As the Rev. Champness explained in 1861, when writing from the Gold Coast, a single missionary was acceptable '... but then he would be only half a missionary'.<sup>34</sup> The WMMS made clear to missionaries that marriage was seen as essential for them.<sup>35</sup> With high mortality rates it was not unusual for both men and women to marry more than once, often within the missionary circle.

Although it may be stating the obvious, the primary function of a missionary wife was to be a wife with all that implies in a foreign country with limited resources but with readily available servants even if there was no common language. The Rev. Ulrich, a German WMMS missionary, sought permission in 1896 to take his wife with him, pleading 'I ought to have a wife to lead me on - to care for the house takes so much time'.<sup>36</sup> He went on to explain that he had an excitable and fiery nature and suffered from sexual vexation. He also required someone to look after him when he was ill. This conventional picture of the duties of a missionary wife is one which seems to apply throughout much of the period being looked at. Nevertheless from the beginning wives were able to do much more than this conventional description of their work would imply. The missionary societies were reasonably clear about the objectives of the missionaries whom they sent out but it was less clear what wives were meant to do, apart from providing a helpmeet for their husbands. As their duties were not closely defined, missionary wives could take advantage of this and decide, within certain constraints, what contribution they could make to the work of

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<sup>32</sup> WMMS Archives *West African Correspondence The Gambia* Rev. Wall to WMMS Secretary 13 January 1838.

<sup>33</sup> WMMS Archives *West African Correspondence The Gambia* Rev. Berry to WMMS Secretary 15 June 1863.

<sup>34</sup> WMMS Archives *West African Correspondence The Gold Coast* Rev. Champness to WMMS Secretary 3 December 1861.

<sup>35</sup> Norman Birtwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman* (London: Corgate Allan Press, 1950), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> WMMS Archives *West African Correspondence Lagos* Rev. Ulrich to WMMS Secretary 10 June 1896

converting the local population. Although the vicar's or minister's wife in England would have been expected to play a major role in organising women's and children's activities at their church such as the Mothers' Union and Sunday school, the challenge abroad was much greater. The wifely duties in West Africa and other parts of the world were more extensive, as there would have been little by way of a supporting network of enthusiastic helpers to whom the vicar's wife could turn. The missionary household would contain young Africans of both sexes who provided the nucleus for a class in religious and other instruction but who were felt to need careful supervision. The wife would have taken part in this. It would have been natural for her to teach classes in housekeeping and related tasks such as repairing and making clothes, particularly because persuading converts to accept western clothing was seen as an essential part of the missionary process. It has been suggested that, for the Victorian, clothes were important because they were the outward representation of the state of the soul and marked the spiritual nature of other people.<sup>37</sup> The missionary wife was also involved in setting up Bible classes as well as Sunday schools for both women and children. Later she would be found attempting to replicate some of the other organisations in England such as the YWCA and missionary endeavour bands. All this was in line with evangelical beliefs that any moment not spent in what was considered to be useful activities was a moment wasted and, if not used profitably, might lead to sinning.

With single female missionaries mostly not being sent out as teachers until around the second half of the 19th century, and with a slow start to introducing African schoolmistresses, it was natural for the missionary wife to start schools for young children and for girls, whilst her husband was involved with the older boys and preparations for baptism and confirmation. Some missionary widows remained in West Africa and provided some indication that women without a husband could still perform a service for the missionary societies, so helping to build up an understanding that unmarried women could be acceptable for service. The arrival of the single female missionary in the last two decades of the 19th century meant that missionary

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<sup>37</sup> Susan Fleming McAllister, 'Cross-Cultural Dress in Victorian British Missionary Narratives: Dressing for Eternity', in *Historicizing Christian Encounters with the Other* ed. by John C. Hawley (London: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 122-134 (p. 129).

wives relinquished some of their activities, particularly teaching. Missionary wives were being paid separately by the CMS for their teaching at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Later this payment was discontinued and husbands received a salary which reflected the fact that they were married.

It is simplistic to suggest that it seemed as though in West Africa the single female missionary took over from the missionary wife since missionary widows also played a part. Female single missionaries sometimes married missionaries and were then content to carry out the accepted duties of such a wife. Where missionaries were pioneers in an area and often at some distance from other missionaries, there were fewer means to sustain the traditional role of men and women in the church.<sup>38</sup> The result was that there was more scope for missionary wives to be involved in a much greater range of activities, even preaching when the husband was absent.

## II Missionary Wives and Widows

Missionary wives were a sensitive subject in that it was difficult for the Victorians to see how the wives could do missionary work whilst at the same time carrying out their domestic duties.<sup>39</sup> Most of the missionaries who were sent out by the CMS and the WMMS in the early stages of its work in West Africa were married and their wives, together with widows of missionaries who remained there plus a few female teachers, constituted a considerable presence of women connected with the missions. How significant an influence they were on missionary work is difficult to assess. The main decisions, such as postings and expansion of mission stations, were taken by the local meetings of the male missionaries. There seem to have been no organised meetings of female missionaries or wives, or at least no reports of them in the archives. Male missionaries met regularly in Freetown, Sierra Leone but their wives were left behind, possibly to mind the station in their husband's absence and also because it was not thought appropriate for women to travel large distances. Unlike their husbands who

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<sup>38</sup> Mary Taylor Huber & Nancy C. Lutkehaus, 'Introduction: Gendered Missions at Home and Abroad', in *Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* ed. by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 1-38 (p. 2).

<sup>39</sup> Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), p. 72.

were required to report to the missionary headquarters at regular intervals, the wives wrote on an ad hoc basis only, revealing their attitudes and commenting on the work they undertook. CMS wives were encouraged to write direct to the Secretary in London so bypassing the local committee which scrutinised all letters which missionaries wrote. Letters from the male missionaries also refer to the activities of their own wives as well as commenting on other missionary wives but such letters are more concerned with the organisation of the missionary work. From the beginning of the CMS mission to Sierra Leone missionary wives were paid because they acted as schoolmistresses. Wives were initially paid £25 a year, a sum which was raised to £50 in 1817 compared with the missionary's salary paid by the CMS of £150. Salary comparisons for other professions are difficult but the average salary for clergy in 1913/14 in England was still £208 pounds only.<sup>40</sup>

The first missionaries whom the CMS sent out to Sierra Leone were mainly German Lutherans who had been trained abroad. Most of these were already married when they were accepted for missionary work by the CMS so their wives automatically accompanied them. However, of the first two volunteers from Germany, the Rev. Hartwig was unmarried when he came to England to be interviewed by the CMS; nevertheless before going out to West Africa he married the former governess employed by the Venn family, stalwarts of the CMS. He was subsequently dismissed from the service of the CMS for slave-trading and unsuitability as a missionary. His wife returned home eventually rejoining her contrite husband who was then taken on by the CMS as an interpreter. Both died shortly afterwards. The comment on Mrs. Hartwig from a fellow missionary was that she was of little use because she had not been 'fortunate in acquiring the affections of the people'.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that such an attitude was thought desirable in a missionary wife although the problems with her husband, arrival in a completely unfamiliar environment and language difficulties must have made it very hard for her to achieve much in the short period that she was there.

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<sup>40</sup> Guy Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain* (London: CUP, 1965), p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E1 Rev. Hadham to CMS Secretary 20 March 1806.



The Rev. Renner married an African woman as his second wife. He had been married when accepted for service but his wife had died in Sierra Leone. The Rev. Renner does not seem to have asked permission to get married from London nor is there any record of the CMS reaction to his marriage. In any case at this time the CMS does not seem to have attached a great deal of importance to the question of marriage for its agents. In 1815 when Edward Bickersteff, then an assistant secretary at the CMS, went to West Africa to investigate matters there (this included reports of missionaries quarrelling amongst themselves and of being drunkards and traders), he was asked to find out about the character of the Rev. Butcher's new wife, if he had indeed remarried. This new task seems to be a trivial matter in the major undertaking that he had been asked to carry out which in effect amounted to providing a master plan for the future development of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone - but it was clearly not thought to be at the time. Edward Bickersteff was given instructions on what he was to investigate in West Africa and these directives were available to all involved. The private instructions given to him by the CMS confirm the interest the CMS took in wives. Bickersteff described one missionary wife as 'the least efficient of women and it is to be feared can do little as a scholar' even though she had about one hundred girls whom she was teaching at the Leicester Mountains mission. Another was described as 'an active and capable woman'.

The CMS was also 'much satisfied' with Mrs. Renner. She seems to have been readily accepted by the other missionaries and she may have been particularly useful because she spoke a local language, Susoo, although this was a start only in a multilingual society. The Rev. Klein writing to the CMS Secretary said that he was very pleased with Mrs. Renner 'tho' she a black woman'.<sup>42</sup> Although there had been some attempt to get the missionaries to learn local languages, this had not been successful and in 1815 Mrs. Renner was the only one among the missionaries who spoke Susoo. In 1812 she wrote to the CMS Secretary expressing her joy at being able to labour in Sierra Leone and 'to be able to work my salvation with fear and trembling'.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting that she emphasises what missionary work is giving

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<sup>42</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E2 Rev. Klein to CMS Secretary 14 February 1812.

<sup>43</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E2 Mrs. Renner to CMS Secretary 12 February 1812.



to her rather than what she is able to give to the Africans. However she was anxious that the children should regard her as their mother. In 1819 when her husband had to return to Freetown to take over as chaplain, she remained at the mission station in the Leicester Mountains in Sierra Leone because the fifty children and the women there were adamant that 'Mammy' must remain.<sup>44</sup> From time to time Mrs. Renner sent gifts to the CMS Secretary's wife in London, whom she had never met nor was likely to meet, and in return she received a shawl. This is an early attempt to establish a relationship between women in totally different spheres within the CMS and the gifts exchanged reflected their common femininity rather than being items of a religious or practical type. After the Rev. Renner died in 1821, it was agreed that Mrs. Renner should continue to run her school but she began to experience considerable hostility from the male missionaries, one having told her that she had worn her husband's trousers.<sup>45</sup>

It was to be expected that wives should write to the CMS headquarters about aspects of life directly affecting them as women in West Africa. Mrs. Klein, wife of the CMS missionary the Rev. Klein and whose portrait appears in App. VI, Fig. 4 wrote to the CMS in 1816 defending him over his drunkenness and saying this was now under control. In 1819 she became very exercised about the proposed institution for training native ministers (what ultimately became the Fourah Bay College in Freetown). She accepted that the idea was good, particularly because the 'African is only capable of improvement when separated from his former connections'.<sup>46</sup> Separation was a common theme for missionaries although perhaps not usually stated in such forceful terms and the secondary schools - for both boys and girls - encouraged as many of their pupils as possible to become boarders even where the children could easily have been day pupils. Mrs. Klein felt that the state of the Africans was too corrupt to admit of anything good under their own steam. Her view was that it was essential for the new institution to be under the control of Europeans. Mrs. Klein also privately made severe criticisms of her fellow missionaries - including the allegation that the Rev. Butcher was cheating the CMS. Although probably not intended to, these criticisms

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<sup>44</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E8 Governor of Sierra Leone to CMS Secretary 21 August 1819.

<sup>45</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M2 Mrs. Renner to CMS Secretary 19 August 1824.

<sup>46</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E7A Mrs. Klein to the CMS Secretary 11 January 1819.

reached the CMS and Mrs. Klein subsequently accepted that she had over-reacted. Her husband had informed the CMS Secretary in 1812 that he had had to dismiss a maidservant because she was telling his children 'depraved things'. It can only be wondered whether his action was purely his own initiative or at the instigation of his wife who would have had more day to day dealings with the servants. Other early missionary wives also corresponded with the CMS Secretary.

The missionary societies appeared to show great concern for the education of girls in West Africa. There was concern that boys received more education, particularly with the setting up of the Fourah Bay College in 1827 which Stock claims '... educated the majority of the (CMS) African clergy and many of the leading laity'. Suitable wives would not be available for these educated Africans unless the education of girls received more attention.<sup>47</sup> Women could influence the next generation and their lack of education would put a brake on progress. In 1827 the CMS Secretary had written to Mrs. Taylor, a schoolmistress in Sierra Leone, earnestly praying that 'you may be an honoured instrument of extensively promoting the spiritual welfare of African females. They will rise to be mothers of families and who can tell the extensive influence which your labours may hereafter achieve'.<sup>48</sup> In this sense women were seen as more useful than male converts. G. W. Findlay, a notable Wesleyan and historian of the WMMS, records the early contributions which missionary wives had made. He refers to Mrs. Davis, the wife of a Welsh missionary, who went to Sierra Leone in 1816, as 'a gifted teacher'.<sup>49</sup> He also mentions another missionary wife, Mrs. Badger, as being amongst 'the most accomplished educational missionaries the Society has had'.<sup>50</sup>

Education was seen as a way to secure an improvement in the quality of Christianity. The Rev. Wrigley of the WMMS who arrived in the Gold Coast in 1836 said that a school for thirty girls had been started and that the syllabus included reading and

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<sup>47</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., I p. 336.

<sup>48</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L2 CMS Secretary to Mrs. Taylor 3 November 1827.

<sup>49</sup> George Gillanders Findlay & Mary Grace Findlay, *Wesley's World Parish* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

sewing. He stated that 'No missionary coming into these parts should be without a female and one too qualified to carry on the instruction of the female part of the population'.<sup>51</sup> Missionary schools in these early days were easily set up and run on low budgets. Later on the CMS and WMMS introduced fees. Often the mission house was built on stilts and the underpart was then available and used as schoolroom. This was the case at St. Mary's in The Gambia, where fifty girls were taught reading, writing, geography, ciphering, singing and plain and fancy needle work. Sewing was taught in many schools with the results either being used to clothe the pupils or, in the case of fancy sewing, to provide items to be sold at bazaars in West Africa or at home. Since clothing was seen as an essential part of the conversion process, children could not attend school unless they were properly dressed which usually meant a print skirt for the girls or a long shirt for the boys. Mr. Hughes, a CMS teacher in Freetown, recorded in his journal of 1818 that the girls were being taught to make bonnets and dresses. Jessie Hogg, a United Presbyterian missionary, explained in a book for children that that it was essential to get people to wear clothes.<sup>52</sup> The girls wore neat print dresses made like pinafores or overalls and the boys suits made from galatea, a cotton material striped in blue on a white background, perhaps nicer to look at than its description suggests. The adults were similarly dressed. At one point the Efik authorities, resentful that the clothing of the female slave converts in European gowns made them look superior to free women, forbade such clothes and banned the slaves from going to church in them. Mrs. Robb, wife of the Rev. Alexander Robb, was insistent that the slaves flout both of these edicts and was successful.<sup>53</sup> In this way she was able to improve the lot of female slaves in some small way. Possibly the missionaries were too successful in their instruction since towards the end of the century they were complaining that the girls put on too much finery, particularly on Sundays. This concern also reflected the almost universal fear from colonisers that their subjects dressed above their station.

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<sup>51</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Correspondence Gold Coast* Rev. Wrigley to WMMS Secretary 17 October 1836.

<sup>52</sup> Jesse F. Hogg, *The Story of the Calabar Mission Written for Children* (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1902), p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longman, 1966), p. 25.

Although missionary wives seemed for the most part to be happy to correspond with the headquarters of the missionary society in London, in general they kept a low profile in public life. An exception was Mrs. Dove, the wife of the WMMS missionary in Freetown, who had been running a school in the 1830s for some thirty girls in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Some recaptive girls had been sent to her to be looked after but had not been formally bound as apprentices as was the practice for such children. Other Sierra Leone residents had tried to take them from her for economic reasons but she had protested violently. Her fear was that if the children were not carefully looked after they would once again become slaves. As a result of complaints from Sierra Leoneans, she was taken before the local magistrates on the grounds of unlawfully detaining the children. She said that she preferred to go to prison rather than surrender the children but her husband paid the fine on her behalf. Whether a magistrate would have sent a white woman to prison is not known but this did happen to European men from time to time, although generally for somewhat more serious offences such as suspected murder. It may be that Mrs. Dove's impassioned protest meant very little as it seems she was unlikely to go to prison. There was considerable concern in the local missionary circles at the time about the treatment of recaptive children and Mrs. Dove's protest can be seen as an attempt to raise public concern about the matter in the only way open to her.

In a different way Mrs. Balmer, the wife of a WMMS missionary in Freetown, achieved some publicity in 1891. She had been running the WMMS secondary school for girls there for a short while until it was found to be too much for her. The Editor of the newspaper, *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, complained to the WMMS mission house in London about the peremptory way in which Mrs. Balmer had demanded that he pay the school fees for his daughter and those of another girl for whom he was also responsible. The Rev. Balmer may have been instrumental in getting his wife to write as he was very concerned that the school should be self-supporting and there was resistance to paying school fees for girls since it was boys who generally had priority. The Editor of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* may have wanted to make a point about high-handed missionaries but it seems excessive to write to London about Mrs. Balmer's actions. It can be argued that the Rev. Balmer and the Editor of the *Sierra*

*Leone Weekly News* were both using Mrs. Balmer to get across their points of view in this instance. Women missionaries seeking or obtaining publicity were very unusual throughout the 19th century. The only two examples encountered were both Wesleyan Methodists but that is probably not significant.

Extracts from the diary of one of the women, Rosina Binder, chosen to be the bride of a Basel Missionary in the Gold Coast, one Johann Widmann, provide an insight into the life and work of a Basel missionary wife. These extracts were reproduced in a Basel Mission Publication.<sup>54</sup> Widman had asked the Mission to find him a wife and the choice fell on Rosina Binder who was found to be 'a well brought-up farmer's daughter' and , perhaps more importantly, 'a truly simple-hearted Christian', without much formal education. Although it may seem strange that the couple exchanged no preliminary letters, the length of time for correspondence to reach Akropong in the Gold Coast may explain this. Rosina spent some time in London in 1846 with a missionary family who had been in India and this experience would have helped to prepare her for her future life as a missionary wife. She was married in Akropong on 21st January 1847. By July 1848 she was writing in her diary that she was teaching some 30 girls in the afternoon. She herself had eleven children and it says much for her general state of health which would have been important in the selection process. Four died in infancy but the others were sent to the home run by the Basel Mission Society for children once they were considered old enough to travel. Rosina's work was described by her husband. She ran the school for small children as well as a Sunday school for the women and older children. She also supervised a household of fifteen people including three orphans, Possibly some of these were children with a vestigial sixth finger, thought to be cursed and usually killed soon after birth and whom she rescued. She seems to have learnt the local language, Twi, very quickly since, soon after her arrival, she wrote that she was conversing with the local people. She was in Akropong from 1847-1876 when her husband died and she returned to Wurttemberg, dying in 1908 where her obituary in the Mission's magazine recorded

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<sup>54</sup> Waltraud Haas, & Ken Phin Pang, *Mission History from the Woman's Point of View* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1989), pp. 32-44.

‘As the years passed she became an ever more faithful and indispensable helper to her husband’.

The wife of the Basel missionary Eisenschmid died in May 1867 and Eisenschmid, in writing about her death, contrasted it with that of the local king who had died about the same time.<sup>55</sup> In Frau Eisenschmid’s case she had sacrificed her life for Africa. Even death could not undermine the usefulness of a missionary wife. In the king’s case on his death 20-30 people were sacrificed plus one of his wives, chosen by the other wives. She had not in fact been properly killed but rose from the grave and had to be despatched again. The incident reminded the readers of the problems of polygyny and human sacrifice and the article ended with a plea for more people to volunteer to work in Africa.

The mission house provided a refuge for members of society who were unable to protect themselves. In her journal of 31st April 1849, some three years after her arrival in Old Calabar, Mrs. Anderson records that a small girl had sought refuge with the missionaries because her mistress - and presumably her owner - had died and she herself was to be killed.<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Anderson describes the missions as ‘a city of refuge for the innocent in this land of blood’. It was to provide a haven for widows, who after their husbands died, were forbidden contact with the outside world and were not allowed to wash or change their clothes until the lengthy funeral rites had been completed, something which might last up to seven years. The mission intervention helped to turn the tide against this practice. It is unlikely that any African woman would have sought refuge in the mission house if there had been no wife nor would an unmarried missionary have been willing to take her in. Mrs. Anderson had been welcomed to Old Calabar by King Eyo II of Creek Town where at an early dinner with him Mrs. Anderson sat on his right-hand side and was addressed as ‘sir’, a fortuitous beginning but which gave her an authority which she was not slow to use in her work. On another occasion she helped administer an emetic to an old man who had been put through the poison bean ordeal as a means of testing his innocence of

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<sup>55</sup> Basel Mission *Heidenbote* 1867, pp. 16-18.

<sup>56</sup> William Marwick, op. cit., p. 194.

certain crimes. It was said that the chiefs of Duke Town in Old Calabar trembled before her.<sup>57</sup> It has been suggested that her husband's influence was largely owing to her but this must be a very subjective judgement since the Rev. Anderson has been described as the warrior of the mission.<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Anderson seems to have got on well with African women, visiting those such as the wives and daughters of the chiefs and kings, who were not allowed to attend public meetings, in order to teach them reading.

When the Andersons returned to Scotland on leave in 1851 they took with them a small boy, whom they had saved from being buried with his deceased mother, and a girl of 12. The Andersons had no children themselves. It was common practice for missionaries to be accompanied by African children on their furloughs. Fund-raising was easier if the missionaries could provide practical examples of how their missionary work was developing and a small child was likely to be more appealing than an adult. A single male missionary could not have transported small children to Britain. Whilst this provided a never to be forgotten experience for the children and helped them to improve their education, re-entry into African society was probably made more difficult. Jeannie, the adopted daughter of Mary Slessor, found it impossible to make her marriage to an African work and she left her husband to return to Mary.

When Mrs. Anderson died in 1882 it was said of her that she had saved 'many a head from being cut off, and many an ear too'.<sup>59</sup> The people in her life seem to have chosen to single out those aspects of her life which most appealed to them. Her husband, in particular, seemed more concerned with her piety and her role as a helpmeet whereas others saw her work with Africans, especially women and girls, as more important. As one of the first women to be part of the United Presbyterian Church's missions in Old Calabar and as one of its long-standing members, she

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>58</sup> Donald MacFarlan, *Calabar, The Church of Scotland Mission 1846-1946* (London: Thos. Maitland Nelson, 1946), p. 58.

<sup>59</sup> W. Dickie, *Missions of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh: Offices of the United Presbyterian Church, 1894), p. 81.



played an important part in the development of the work with women as well as in developing the role of the female missionary.

Although it is Mary Slessor's name which is most associated with the saving of twins from being killed, the Qua Iboe mission was also involved. It set up a home at Okat in Southern Nigeria which in 1905 had six mothers and seven twin children. It would have been beyond the resources of the missionaries to rescue all the twins nor would the mission necessarily have known about their birth or have been in time to rescue them. The setting up of a home for twins was intended not only to rescue them from being put to death but also to bring them up and to show the local community that there was nothing inherently evil about them. The Africans considered that one of the twins must have been fathered by an evil spirit but both had to be killed as there was no means of distinguishing between them. Even being allowed to start a home such as the one at Okat was a major step in view of the entrenched local custom. Thus the mission was able to bring about changes by example rather than trying to enforce new requirements. Women were an essential part of this process. The home was also used to generate interest in the work of the mission. Mrs. Baillie, another missionary wife, wrote an article for a Qua Iboe Occasional Paper which was made all the more appealing because of the pictures of the babies saved. In the end the mothers agreed to wear dresses for the photograph which was a matter of great relief for Mrs. Baillie.<sup>60</sup> The Mission could then illustrate their civilising influence not just on saving twin babies but also on having persuaded their mothers to wear clothes. Gracie Bill expressed similar concerns that the girls associated with the mission should wear dresses but that the parents were very much against the idea. She does not attempt to explain why the parents thought this way. It may have been because of the cost, although it is likely that the dresses would have been supplied by the missions, or just that the missionaries were trying to interfere with long-standing customs. The Home Council of the Qua Iboe Mission was keen that older girls should be taken into missionaries' houses, possibly because they could then be ready more quickly to become wives of converted Africans.

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<sup>60</sup> Qua Iboe Missionary Society Archives D3301/AD/1 Mrs. Baillie to Secretary 22 August 1902.



Sometimes the rescue operation was on a large scale. In 1899 130 slaves escaped from slave dealers by canoe and fled to the Qua Iboe mission station at Ibuno.<sup>61</sup> Most were women plus a few children and twenty-nine men. The influx of such a large number was a major problem in terms of accommodation and food since they stayed for six weeks, the length of time it took for the colonial government to organise their return home to Opobo. It is not clear whether the escaped slaves knew of the mission and fled to it or whether they found it by chance. They do not appear to have been pursued by their owners nor is it clear how they became enslaved or whether in returning home they risked further enslavement. Owning slaves was not illegal at the time in the Qua Iboe region, including Ibuno, but trading in them was so this may account for the fact that the slave dealers did not attempt repossession. The mission also provided a refuge for wives who were badly beaten by their husbands.

One area in which missionary wives were active was in the setting up and running of various organisations associated with the church, particularly those involving women and children. Such organisations became more numerous as the mission station became more established and these served an important role in attracting people to church. They also provided means of raising funds. One measure of the success of a mission was the size of its congregation but another was whether there were thriving ancillary groups associated with the church in addition to schools and Sunday schools. There were no systematic returns made of such organisations but initiatives clearly depended very much on the energy and interests not only of the local missionary but also of his wife. She would have been closely involved in the running of groups such as the Juvenile Missionary Associations, Women's Christian Associations and Ladies' Working Groups although the names varied according to the missionary society involved. It would have been difficult if not impossible for the minister himself to run such groups.

The Juvenile Missionary Associations were set up to collect small sums for missionary work. In 1878 there are reports of such associations in Yoruba and Popo

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<sup>61</sup> Qua Iboe Missionary Society Archives D3301/AG Samuel Bill to Secretary 20 March 1899.

and in 1882 in Lagos and Abeokuta.<sup>62</sup> The sums involved were small, for example, the Association in Porto Novo raised £4.10.0 in 1880 but the both the CMS and WMMS were very good at raising small sums from a number of resources which in total could be significant. The Young Women's Christian Associations (YWCA) were involved in making garments for the poor in the schools and churches. The Lagos synod minutes of 1899 record the valuable gifts from the Dorcas branches of the Yoruba YWCA and in the same year in Faji 179 garments were completed.<sup>63</sup> The WMMS Women's Auxiliary often received requests for and sent out sewing equipment and materials to West Africa and it was groups such as the YWCA which turned these into garments. However it would be wrong to think that such groups were solely concerned with sewing. At Olowagbowo in the Lagos WMMS circuit in 1904 the Ladies' Working Guild and the YWCA helped to provide a house for a second minister.<sup>64</sup> In the Yoruba interior circuit in 1900 some members of Mrs. Price Hughes' Society class were supporting a boy at school at Oyo.<sup>65</sup> These last two examples show how the groups associated with women, and in which missionary wives took a leading role, were attempting to move beyond their traditional role and to help the missionary society to develop its activities. Nevertheless to some extent they kept within a traditional role by supporting a boy rather than a girl. The fact that these activities were reported in the minutes suggest that the intention was to encourage others, who might see the minutes or take part in discussions at the synod meetings, to follow the examples set. It has to be recognised that it was the male missionaries who were most likely to learn about the new activities of women's groups and it would be up to them to decide whether to promote such activities in their own area. The various women's groups remained very dependent on the local missionary for what they might or might not undertake.

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<sup>62</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Nigeria* Synod Minutes 1882, Report on the religious state of the Societies in the Lagos Circuit for the year 1881.

<sup>63</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Nigeria* Synod Minutes 1899, Lagos District Report for the year ending 31 December 1898.

<sup>64</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Nigeria* Synod Minutes 1904, Lagos District Minutes - Lagos (Olowagbowo) report.

<sup>65</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Nigeria* Synod Minutes 1900, Yoruba Interior Circuit Report.

The home visiting system developed in England to provide charitable help in towns and visitors, often women, were assigned to a district of twenty to forty families.<sup>66</sup> This traditional role for ministers' wives of visiting the sick, the elderly and the poor does not appear to have been undertaken in West Africa as there are very few references to such activities. The possibility of catching a disease may have been seen as one problem. It may have been unacceptable for ministers' wives to make the visits on their own and the minister himself may not have wished to spare the time to accompany her. The missionary wife may also have felt out of her depth and uncomfortable in visiting the local people. Many of these reasons would also have applied in England when women visited in some of the cities but seemed doubly difficult in Africa. In contrast in a tribute to his wife who died in Sierra Leone in 1845, the Rev. Bultmann emphasised that she saw visiting the local congregation at their homes as an important part of her activities. Such visiting apparently often took precedence over a recreational walk.<sup>67</sup>

Although the CMS had decided from the start of its missionary work that single women would not be sent to West Africa, as the mission work became more established it had to make exceptions to this rule. This was because, when missionaries died, as happened frequently, their widows sometimes wished to stay on, usually to teach. Sometimes they appeared to remain in the hope of remarrying as in the case of Sarah Heighway. She and Thomas Heighway came to Freetown in 1827 shortly after their marriage. He died soon afterwards and his widow remained, marrying in 1830 another missionary, John Warburton who was 25 whilst she was 35.<sup>68</sup> They returned to England in 1850 where she was a vicar's wife for a further eighteen years. The wall plaque to her in Malling church describes her as 'meek and lowly in heart'.

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<sup>66</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 98.

<sup>67</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M12 F. B. Bultmann. *A Memoir of Mrs. F. Bultmann, formerly Lina Wilkens*, dated simply September 1845 - see App. V.

<sup>68</sup> Private Correspondence with Sue Ladipo 30 September 2001.

In 1819, when the Rev. Wenzell died, his wife asked to stay on and was supported in this by the local missionaries. She was experienced at the work because in 1816 she had had one hundred girls in her school and was obliged to take on a local person to assist her. The CMS agreed that she should stay on provided that she gave 'really efficient aid'.<sup>69</sup> The Governor of Sierra Leone had taken an interest in her and this may have been a factor in the decision by the CMS. She was to be paid £50 a year, the rate at which missionary wives were paid but they would have been partly supported by their husbands who would have been provided with a house. £50 a year was the very lowest on which a European could have lived in Sierra Leone. Mrs. Wenzel was stationed at Kissy Town, near Freetown, and appears to have provided the 'really efficient aid' stipulated since there is no record of any complaints about her. She was still employed as a teacher in 1825 when she requested a passage to England, to be paid for by the CMS, to visit her nieces, the orphaned daughters of Rev. Nylander who had served for nineteen years in Sierra Leone. This request was rejected somewhat brusquely by the CMS. Overall the treatment of Mrs. Wenzell was one of grudging acceptance of her services. As the first missionary widow to stay and work for the CMS in Sierra Leone, the Society may have felt that it had to tread cautiously because of setting precedents.

By 1849, when the Rev. Clemens of the CMS died and his wife asked to stay on, there had been a change of attitude within the CMS. Mrs. Clemens took over the school for liberated Africans at Charlotte in Sierra Leone and remained there until 1864, being allowed home on leave in 1856. Mrs. Clemens' school for sixty liberated African girls consisted of three large houses, a storehouse, three privies and stables.<sup>70</sup> In addition there were what are described as 'seven farms' but which were probably more like large gardens. These were used to grow cassava to feed the girls. Mrs. Bultmann, the wife of the Rev. Bultmann, wrote a glowing account in her journal of the work which Mrs. Clemens was doing:- 'Her every movement among the children is so Matron-like; her daily example of instruction and her ever-needed advice and direction, so considerate and truly Christian; that so long as she continues in the

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<sup>69</sup> CMS Archives CA1 E7 CMS Secretary to Rev. Collier 15 February 1819.

<sup>70</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M16 Mrs. Clemens to CMS Secretary 1 July 1858.

colony, she will ever be looked up to as the spiritual mother by every one of her tender charges'.<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Bultmann felt that Mrs. Clemens 'leans rather to the side of severity than indulgent forbearance', a comment which could have applied to many missionaries. By 1860 the school had one hundred and fifty children and Mrs. Clemens had a European assistant teacher plus local African women to teach and to manage the domestic side of the school. Mrs. Clemens broke with the tradition that women could not excel in the so-called traditional male occupations of agriculture, building and administration. The running of such an establishment would have given both satisfaction and status of which she was not slow to take advantage. For example she complained in 1860 to the CMS Secretary that she was not being kept informed about the plans for her school; specifically she refused to receive a replacement European teacher on the grounds that she had not been consulted but it seems more likely that she wished to bring over someone from Germany, her home country. She obviously considered that she was within her rights. Mrs. Clemens would have been difficult to replace if she had decided to return home, particularly as this would have created problems with the colonial administration that had by then once again handed over the welfare of the liberated African girls to the CMS. Mrs. Clemens was able to exploit the situation to her advantage. She also proved capable of running a large establishment on her own, although there are some references from time to time to a school committee, and she enjoyed having considerable autonomy. She was referred to as looking like a Lady Abbess and this seems an apt way to describe her physical appearance and her presence. Mrs. Clemens was in Sierra Leone from 1848 to 1864 which included nineteen years running the school for liberated African girls at Charlotte. She did not die in office but Stock, the official historian of the CMS wrote that she '... deserves .... an honoured place among the heroines of Sierra Leone'.<sup>72</sup>

After the death of the Rev. Beale in 1856, his widow preferred to remain in Sierra Leone and to open a school. In 1858 she had twelve boarding and thirteen day girls. In writing to the CMS Secretary she described her day as starting at 5 a.m. when she

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<sup>71</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M12 Journal of Mrs. Bultmann for March 1852

<sup>72</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., I p. 181.

prayed in private and then gave out the food to be cooked for breakfast.<sup>73</sup> After breakfast at 0830, school was from 1000 hours to 1300 hours. After lunch the girls were occupied with needlework until 1600 hours when the day girls went home and the boarders prepared the evening meal. Mrs. Beale was very enthusiastic about the girls in her school, for example writing in 1861 that she had never had such a promising set of girls and that she was training some to become teachers. By 1865 she had limited herself to boarders because the Female Institution (a secondary school for girls in Freetown - see Chapter IV) was fully open. She mentioned that several of her girls had married African pastors. In addition to the school she ran a Bible class for forty to fifty women. How far Mrs. Beale's remaining in Sierra Leone was a genuine sacrifice on her part or whether life in England as the widow of a cleric did not hold many attractions is not known. Her son was brought up in England and eventually became a missionary in West Africa sometime after his mother's death. Mrs. Beale clearly liked Sierra Leone and was very enthusiastic about her home, Lily Cottage. Domestic settings are much more prominent in women's writings than in men's.<sup>74</sup> The preservation of the home as a place with artefacts and bric-a-brac could have made her more culturally resistant to indigenous culture but it seems that the idea of a home made her work with the girls more socially intimate. She could have expected to remarry without too many problems but chose not to. She seems to have felt a genuine concern and interest in Africans and was willing to contribute to their welfare. She was in Sierra Leone for twenty-five years, including the ten years during which she ran her school. The CMS Secretary in his tribute to her wrote 'Her singular devoteness to the good of Africa, her high tone of Christian feeling and her great experience were a tower of strength to the mission'.<sup>75</sup>

There were many reasons why missionary widows remained in West Africa. Many of them had become very used to the lifestyle and had survived the health problems. Africa had become their home. In returning to Europe they faced an uncertain future but one probably of poverty and dependence on relatives and friends for a means of

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<sup>73</sup> CMS Archives CA1/038 Mrs. Beale to CMS Secretary 20 October 1859.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 159.

<sup>75</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L8 H. Venn to Rev. Caiger 23 January 1867.

living. In Africa they could enjoy autonomy beyond anything that was likely to be available for them at home. Some were inspired by a love of Africans, others possibly by a love of power. Their contribution, though at first accepted grudgingly by the CMS, seems to have become valued.

Although death was ever present in West Africa in the 19th century, the place was not without its attractions. No evangelical woman would have, however, admitted that her stay there could be enjoyable. She would have emphasised duty and calling. Other Victorian travellers were not so reticent. Mary Kingsley, the geographer and ethnographer, who spent much of her time in West Africa at the end of the 19th century wrote:-

The charm of West Africa is a painful one. It gives you pleasure to fall under its sway when you are out there but when you are back here [in England] it gives you pain by calling you. It sends up before your eyes a vision of dancing, white, rainbow-gemmed surf playing on a shore of yellow sand before an audience of stately, cocoa palms or a great mangrove walled bronze river or of a vast cathedral forest.<sup>76</sup>

Mary Gaunt, another later traveller, wrote 'Africa has gripped me'.<sup>77</sup> There is no reason to think that the widowed missionaries did not feel the same. This would have been their first major journey and their first new continent, their first breaking of the link with home and the forging of a new identity. Many wives expressed their delight in the journey to their new home in Africa. They would have been left with powerful impressions which would have influenced their decisions after being widowed on whether or not to return to Europe. Many travellers discovered in foreign lands an emotional fulfilment and an almost special relationship which they had been unable to find at home, a special tie to a people and a land. The missionary widows were closely involved with the Africans and would have particularly felt this tie, although how much real warmth they felt for them is difficult to judge.

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<sup>76</sup> Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *West Africa from an Ethnologist's Point of View*, pp. 72-73 Quoted in Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 251.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Gaunt, *Alone in West Africa* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), p. 266.



The missionary societies made it easier for wives and widows to remain overseas through the provision of children's homes where their children and also those of married couples could be looked after. The CMS opened a children's home in Islington in 1850. In 1853 this moved to a purpose built home in Highbury and accommodated eighty boys and girls. The total cost was £19,000 of which £5,000 came from a legacy from Miss Cooke of Cheltenham who left the money specifically for a children's home. In 1886 the home was moved to Limpsfield in Surrey. The home has been described as 'the greatest possible boon to the missionaries'.<sup>78</sup> The Basel Mission Society built a similar home, still standing in all its gloom, at its headquarters. Those working for less wealthy societies made arrangements, usually with relatives, for their children to be looked after. Unusually, Mr. and Mrs. Waddell kept their daughter with them whole time that they were in Old Calabar from 1846-1858. The Scottish missionaries did not open a children's home until 1916. It was not difficult to justify separating children from their parents who lived in tropical countries and was a common practice among expatriates. Colonial officials were not allowed to take their children to Nigeria until after W.W.II.<sup>79</sup> Rudyard Kipling was one such child who felt the separation bitterly and spent five years in a foster home, which he described in his story *Baa Baa, Black Sheep* (1888). The missionary children would have provided an easy way to connect with the local children but possibly this was not seen as being desirable. It seems curious that, when the missionaries were promoting the idea of a monogamous nuclear family structure in West Africa, they were sending their own children back home. There is no reason to think that missionary mothers were lacking in maternal feelings in doing this. It was yet one more sacrifice to be made. Some found the separation difficult. Gracie Bill, who was the wife of the leader of the Qua Iboe mission, returned for long periods to Belfast. There was no doubt that she was seriously ill but she may well have prolonged her stay because she felt the need to be with her two children who remained in Ireland.

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<sup>78</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., II p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (London: MacMillan, 1987), p. 21.

Missionaries frequently intervened to save the lives of those they came to convert. Women were part of this effort. Miss Miller joined the Scottish mission in Old Calabar in 1849 from Jamaica. She was soon involved in helping to ameliorate, or in some instances to save, the lives of the African women in the area. The Rev. Waddell recorded that, during his visits which his wife and Miss Miller made to the King's wives at Duke Town, they discovered that one had been expelled for disobedience. The King had forbidden anyone to feed or shelter her, including the missionaries.<sup>80</sup> This was in effect a sentence of death. After some persuasion from Mrs. Waddell and Miss Miller, he relented. At stake was the King's authority, particularly with his nobles who, Waddell suggested, might require that the wife be made an example for other wives. In 1854 Miss Miller married Mr. A. Sutherland, a teacher at the mission who died shortly afterwards. Mrs. Sutherland decided to remain in Old Calabar. She was referred to as 'Mammy Sutherland' and as someone who '... wrote her name on the heart of Calabar'.<sup>81</sup> In the mornings she ran a school for 80-90 children and in the afternoon visited women in their homes, dispensing medicines and giving vaccinations against smallpox. Thus the mission was able to contact those women who could not leave their homes to visit the missions. In 1866 she nursed a chief, Henry Cobham, the originator of the quotation which opened this chapter, until his death. She then provided a refuge for those wives who thought they were to be killed to accompany him on his final journey. She compiled a list of Cobham's wives, implying that she knew them quite well and she was then able to prevent any of them being sacrificed.<sup>82</sup> Possibly she had been influenced by the idea of saving the wives when she nursed Henry Cobham. The threat of sacrifice was real as in 1847 King Eyamba of Old Calabar had died and thirty of his wives (out of one hundred) had been killed. The wives were given rum and told that 'The King calls you' before being strangled by a silken cloth. One hundred slaves were killed on the death of a chief, John Duke, also in 1847. Such incidents would have graphically reminded those at home of the problems which the missionaries had to overcome. Again in 1868 the

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<sup>80</sup> H. M. Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858* (London, Frank Cass, 1970), p. 473.

<sup>81</sup> Donald MacFarlan, *Calabar, the Church of Scotland Mission 1846-1946* (London: Thos. Maitland Nelson, 1946), p. 49.

<sup>82</sup> *United Presbyterian Missionary Record* 1st March 1866 pp. 42-44.

Rev. Anderson and Mrs. Sutherland were able to save a batch of slaves who were about to be sacrificed, by negotiating with the chief involved. Such rescue actions reflected the growing authority of the missionaries, not least the missionary women.

Mrs. Sutherland was also involved in preaching to women and in 1880 she was preaching publicly in the streets of Old Calabar. This was mentioned in the *Missionary Record* of July 1880 so, although it was felt worth mentioning, it did not call for special comment and must by then have been seen as an acceptable practice. This was in contrast to many other missionary societies working in British West Africa. When the Scottish missionaries took over from the Basel Mission Society in the Gold Coast in 1917, it was considered that women could not preach and that there would be a riot if they did.<sup>83</sup> Both the Basel Mission Society and the WMMS who provided the missionaries in the Gold Coast did not allow women to preach and this was presumably why the Scottish missionaries had to tread warily.

In May 1880 Mrs. Sutherland wrote a letter to the *Missionary Record* in which she related the ways in which she considered African women had benefited from the work of the missionaries in Old Calabar. Widows were now confined to their houses for only a few weeks after their husband's death instead of the lengthy period previously required. Twin mothers were allowed in the town and to go to the market. She also recalled the first set of twins who had been saved and how frightened people had been of them. The missionaries could claim part only of the praise for this as in 1878 the British consul for the area had negotiated an agreement with the chiefs of Old Calabar on twin births; but the agreement put a political seal on the work of the missionaries.<sup>84</sup> The mission house provided a refuge for such children and their mothers; for example the Rev. Goldie recalled that he and his wife provided such shelter. Actions like these helped to reinforce the negotiated agreement with the chiefs. This policy had been pursued despite some opposition from the Foreign Missions Committee which

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<sup>83</sup> *Women's Missionary Magazine Reports from the Fields - Africa - Gold Coast*, August 1919 p. 93.

<sup>84</sup> Donald MacFarlan, *Calabar, the Church of Scotland Mission 1846-1946* (London, Thos. Maitland Nelson, 1946), p. 67.

thought that the idea of sanctuary in a mission house smacked of popery and that the missionaries should not interfere with the civil administration of the country.<sup>85</sup>

The number of women serving in Old Calabar grew over the years. In 1867 there had been three single women missionaries only. In September 1901 there were three in Duke Town, two in Creek Town, three in Emuremura and Mary Slessor in Okoyong.<sup>86</sup> The number of women made it possible to organise women's meetings and in May 1903 a women's conference was held in Duke Town where the theme of the main speech was 'The change in the position of women since the Gospel came to Calabar'.<sup>87</sup> A further conference was held in 1908, which eighteen girls from Duke Town attended with the intention that they could hear about the work in other parts of Old Calabar. Each area representative gave a report on the work accomplished by women for women of their district. A Biblewoman, Susannah, spoke about the Sunday service she held in the women's prison. Such meetings were important for African women to exchange ideas and experiences and to further the creation of a women's network.

The Creek Town Institute for girls had been started in 1862 by the Scottish missionaries and was intended for free-born girls but initially it took twins, orphans and slaves. This was a boarding school and, whilst the holidays when the girls went home were seen as a time when the girls might regress in their behaviour, these were also seen as a time when the girls could carry the Christian message to their own people. In 1908 the girls formed a purity league which the girls themselves ran. There are a few examples of what the girls did after leaving the Institute. For the most part they married but many still continued with evangelisation work. Later on some found work as nurses in the native hospital in Old Calabar. The need for Christian girls to find some way of earning a living was to be one of the causes which Mary Slessor espoused.

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<sup>85</sup> Somerville to H. Goldie 20th Nov. 1848; U. P. Secretaries' Letter Book, Vol. I. p. 211: quoted in Ajayi, J. F. A., *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1897: The Making of a New Elite* (London, Longmans, 1965), p. 117.

<sup>86</sup> *Women's Missionary Magazine* September 1901 p. 237.

<sup>87</sup> Mrs. Weir *Women's Missionary Magazine* November 1903 p. 256.

### Anna Hinderer

Anna Hinderer served as a CMS missionary wife in Yorubaland for seventeen years from 1853-69 and during this period she kept a journal and wrote regularly to her friends. A book was compiled from these materials in 1870 soon after her death by a friend, the Rev. Hone, Archdeacon of Worcester. She was a fairly prolific correspondent and her journal was written up regularly for most of the time she was in Africa despite considerable illnesses and a war. Her writings provide an insight into the role of a pioneer missionary wife in mid 19th century West Africa. They reveal her attitudes and aspirations despite the fact that what has been included in the book remains a selection by the compiler. Her portrait (see App. VI, Fig. 4) shows a woman plainly dressed with a simple hairstyle but with an air of quiet determination and reliability. The introduction by the Rev. Hone contrasts the work of the two Hinderers. His work was chiefly ministering to the congregation, preaching in the open air, starting new branch missions and teaching reading and writing. Her work was mostly within the mission compound, being particularly involved with the children 'civilising, training and teaching'.<sup>88</sup> It is emphasised that 'she was always employed within her own proper sphere'.<sup>89</sup>



Anna Hinderer had religious convictions from her early childhood. Her mother died when she was 5 and she went to live with her grandfather and aunt when she was 10 and appears to have seen little of her father from then on. Certainly he was not an important influence in her life. She attended church regularly with her grandfather. She is said to have loved Sunday above every day and that the Te Deum carried her to heaven. From an early age she had a strong desire to become a missionary and she became involved in good works from the age of 12 when she started teaching in a Sunday school. This led to a close friendship with the local vicar and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. Cunningham, a sister of Elizabeth Fry and a member of the Gurney banking family. She then went to live with the Cunninghams, acting as the Vicar's

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<sup>88</sup> Anna Hinderer, *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1873), p. ix.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. viii.

secretary. He was reputed to have been very impractical.<sup>90</sup> Mrs. Cunningham was the author of 'Nine Views of the Continent' which has been described as 'remarkably competent'.<sup>91</sup> The profits were to be devoted to charity so Anna would have been aware from an early age of the idea of giving to those who were less fortunate in life. She became steadily more involved with the poor and she started a Sunday class for ragged and neglected children when she was 14 which is said to have attracted 200 pupils.<sup>92</sup> She later said that looking back she saw these years as preparation for her work in Africa.

It was not surprising that she should have been attracted to David Hinderer, the CMS missionary who was on leave from his work in Africa and giving talks on his experience to get support for the CMS mission station in Ibadan, a town of 100,000 people which he had already visited. In 1852 she married him and she now 'rejoiced in the thought of living and dying for Africa'.<sup>93</sup> In 1853 the Hinderers landed at Lagos with three companions and made their way initially to Abeokuta where Anna Hinderer stayed whilst her husband went to Ibadan to make the final arrangements for their arrival. She provides a graphic description of their journey which was by canoe, sleeping in tents. It is difficult to imagine the contrast between the quiet life which she had led in Norfolk and her new life in Africa. She belied the image of the delicately brought up Victorian lady and appears to have enjoyed the journey very much. She wrote 'I feel that if I had twenty lives I would gladly give them to be the means of a little good to these poor but affectionate and well-meaning people, who, though black enough their skins may be, have never-dying souls'.<sup>94</sup> Throughout her stay in the Yoruba country she was to comment on the black skins of the people. She had possibly never seen anyone from Africa beforehand although no doubt she would have been told countless times of the 'black heathens'. She claimed to have made many friends among the Africans 'Their black skins make no difference to me'. The story of her travel comes not just from her sensibility and powers of observation but

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<sup>90</sup> Owen Chadwick, *Victorian Miniature* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), p. 130.

<sup>91</sup> Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 153.

<sup>92</sup> Anna Hinderer, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

out of interaction and experience from 'travelees' who are working from their own understandings of their world.<sup>95</sup> Grewall has commented that 19th century travel narratives which include descriptions of foreign landscapes as beautiful do not see the people of those lands as beautiful.<sup>96</sup> This is the case with Anna Hinderer.

The final journey from Abeokuta to Ibadan is illustrated in Anna's book. The picture in App. VI. fig. 5 was almost certainly drawn by someone in England but fits in with the description in Anna Hinderer's diary of a long train of attendant carriers while she, herself, was carried in a hammock. The trees bear close resemblance to oaks and except for the very long grass the scene could be a sylvan landscape in England. Curiously Anna Hinderer is hidden by a tree although the hammock bearers are shown. It is David Hinderer on horseback and so taller than any others who dominates the picture and oversees the carriers, giving little doubt who is the master of this flock. The reticence to portray Anna Hinderer perhaps reflects the comment in the introduction that 'she was always engaged in her own sphere' which was subordinate to that of her husband. In later editions of the book Anna Hinderer is shown in full view and the background is much more African.

The artist portrays the impression that the line of bearers stretches indefinitely because neither the beginning nor the end of it are visible. This possibly symbolises the vast numbers whom the missionaries were to convert and would have brought home to readers the immense task which missionaries had taken on. Anna Hinderer wrote that her bearers were very anxious for her to arrive in Ibadan in a hammock and there was great competition as to who should be the bearers. She was the first white woman to visit the town so there could have been some status in being one of her bearers. As if to endorse this comment, she records that thousands greeted them as they arrived to catch a glimpse of this 'wonderful white woman'.<sup>97</sup> The use of a hammock would have also reminded people at home of her vulnerability and delicacy as a woman.

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<sup>95</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 136.

<sup>96</sup> Inderpal Grewall, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 44.

<sup>97</sup> Anna Hinderer, op. cit., p. 55.



Initially in Ibadan the Hinderer's home was a small native dwelling with no windows or doors but Anna Hinderer soon gave it 'an air of quiet domestic comfort'. She was soon involved in teaching a large class of men and women and inviting African children into the house, four of whom were soon to live with her. She experienced difficulties in getting pupils for the school which she started because she said that 'people are afraid to send their children ; they think 'book' will make them cowards'.<sup>98</sup> Towards the end of 1853 the new mission house and a church was started. An artist's impression of these buildings shows a two storey house with a colonnaded front, very unlike anything else in Ibadan, as if to emphasise the newness of the religion which the Hinderers brought with them and also to arouse people's curiosity to make them want to visit. The picture (App. VI, Fig. 6) is distorted to give prominence to the house and church in relation to the rest of the town. They were on the outskirts of the town to minimise the risk of being burnt down in the event of a fire in the town. The distance from the town serves to accentuate the difference between the missionaries and the population they were seeking to convert. There is also a conscious effort in the painting to show an organised and disciplined atmosphere in the missionary compound in contrast to the haphazard growth of the town. Readers of Anna Hinderer's memorial would have been reminded of how their contributions to missionary funds had helped to provide the buildings.

The Hinderers enjoyed some success in their work with reports of baptisms and confirmations and a visit by Bishop Samuel Crowther in 1855. Their first wedding also took place that year. Sunday school numbers rose to 40-50 adults. The Hinderers then returned to England for health reasons and during this time David Hinderer spoke at missionary meetings whilst his wife spoke at working parties and other private gatherings. By 1858 they were back in Ibadan where Anna Hinderer refers to her own special flock of 27 children and of the comfort she found in native teachers.<sup>99</sup> David Hinderer was often away and on a rare occasion Anna Hinderer took charge of a service. War between Ibadan and another town, Ijaye, broke out in

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

1860 and the roads to Lagos and the coast were cut, leaving the Hinderers isolated in Ibadan. The war severely interrupted the work of the mission and David Hinderer spent the time working on translations of the scriptures into Yoruba. In 1865 the Governor of Lagos sent men to rescue the Hinderers in a cloak and dagger operation who then went to England, not returning to Ibadan until the end of 1866.

Anna Hinderer then resumed her teaching which she records included history, geography and 'Nicholl's help' plus sewing for the girls. Once a week she took a class for women to teach them sewing. It is not clear how proficient she was in Yoruba but she had some knowledge of it, at the very least. There was also a school for adults on Sundays in the church with the women on one side and the men on the other. The whole of Sunday was occupied with classes and services and people brought their lunch with them. For the Hinderers this intensity of religious devotion was likely to have been very rewarding and would have confirmed their decision to become missionaries. By this time the church which measured 70 feet by 30 feet had been beautified with a communion table, rails, pulpit and font.<sup>100</sup> The Yoruba country continued to be very unsettled and some missionaries had to be evacuated but the Hinderers were not molested and remained. Membership of the church continued to grow and in 1868 there were 100 baptised Christians, although given that Ibadan had 100,000 people this was still a very small proportion. In 1869 the Hinderers returned permanently to England because of ill-health, Anna dying in 1870 at the age of 43.

Anna Hinderer's life provided an exemplar for other women to emulate - a very religious life with an early determination to be involved in missionary work, a trying period in a difficult country as the help-meet of a missionary and then dying at an early age after some suffering. The Victorians were particularly attracted to womanly self-sacrifice so her story was bound to be popular. This was the stuff that helped to build the cult of the missionary heroine which was to become pronounced by the end of the 19th century.

#### Hannah Kilham, 1774-1832

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 295.

‘Africa will, I believe, be ever dear to my heart, and I would pray that no shrinking from danger should ever interfere with what is called for from me in this injured people’s cause.’ This quotation is attributed to Hannah Kilham in the opening part of the biography of her, prepared by her daughter-in-law, Sarah Biller, although no source is given. Hannah Kilham kept a very extensive diary for much of her life and the biography of 500 pages largely reproduces this. Much of it is devoted to her spiritual development but amongst the rather indigestible writing there is an account of her life and the reasons which decided her to go to the Gambia and Sierra Leone where she died in 1832.

Hannah Spurr was born to respectable ‘tradespeople’ in Sheffield in 1774. After her mother’s death she was brought up by a married sister. From early on she is said to have attended evening prayers and to have helped the poor. Between the ages of 14 and 16 she went to a boarding school in Chesterfield where her teacher considered that she had made too much progress and thought ‘her overstepping the bounds of the female province’.<sup>101</sup> When she was 20 she joined the Methodists, having been brought up as an Anglican. Soon after she made a vow to give herself to God, apparently a common practice among early Methodists. She then began corresponding with Alexander Kilham, a minister of some importance in Methodism, who was the author of various pamphlets and presumably it was about these that they corresponded. Kilham was a widower and they were married in April 1798. He died in December 1798. A daughter was born in April 1799 who died of scarlet fever in 1802. Although she had step children, these were grown-up and she was free to pursue her own interests. In 1800 Hannah Kilham had joined the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Nottingham. This was probably significant in determining her future since the Quakers were used to much greater equality between men and women than other denominations. She opened a successful day and boarding school for girls in Sheffield.<sup>102</sup> She was a woman with a social conscience who helped to develop the setting up of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor in Sheffield and also the Society for Visiting and Relieving Aged Families. More or less at the same time

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<sup>101</sup> Sarah Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham* (London: Darton Harvey, 1835), p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Mora Dickson, *The Powerful Bond: Hannah Kilham 1774-1832* (London: Denis Dobson, 1980), p. 75.

her interest in missionary work was developing. This initially took the form of sending books out for the children of Sierra Leone but she then decided to go to West Africa herself.

Her interest in Africa was stimulated by her involvement with two sailors from Sierra Leone who had been placed in Tottenham to teach them English where she helped to produce a written version of the Jolof language spoken in Sierra Leone. In 1823 she went to St. Mary's, the Gambia, with three others and the sailors and established a school for mulatto girls. At the end of the 1820s she went to Sierra Leone where she established a school for 20 girls which was later expanded to take in a further 56 girls from the CMS school which was being closed. The Rev. Davey writing from Sierra Leone in 1828 told the CMS Secretary that she would give a personal report to him, and explaining those matters which the missionaries did not wish to put in writing.<sup>103</sup> Although not formally connected with the CMS she was by this time regarded as something of an expert on West Africa. In 1845 the Rev. Bultmann, in recommending a certain Madam Roy to be considered for the head of the CMS Female Institute in Freetown, wrote 'As to energy of mind, I can compare her to none more aptly than the late Mrs. Kilham'.<sup>104</sup>

In 1830 she wrote and had published a tract entitled 'The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction Through the Native Languages'.<sup>105</sup> She was concerned that the children among the recaptives i.e. those Africans taken from slaving ships and sent to Sierra Leone, were not being sufficiently cared for. The usual arrangement was for such children to be apprenticed to poor Africans with little oversight by the authorities so that the children might again be sold into slavery. Death rates were high. She suggested that, given suitable instruction, the children would appear far from backward. The main problem, as she saw it, was that English only was used for teaching which the children could not understand. Her plea was for the native languages to be used whilst recognising the major problems of translating so many

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<sup>103</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M2 Rev. Davey to CMS Secretary 18 February 1828.

<sup>104</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M12 Rev. Bultmann to CMS Secretary 27 January 1846.

<sup>105</sup> Hannah Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction Through the Native Languages* (London: Harvey & Darton, 1830).

languages which did not have a written form. She suggested that Africans themselves should be used to make the translations and that they would be sent to England to learn English where suitable arrangements would be made to house them and provide the training. She recalls that the Society of Friends had already made a start in providing translations in native languages for schools, covering 30 languages and that this work could be developed. Hannah Kilham's proposal was remarkably farsighted although so far as is known it was not proceeded with at the time.

Hannah Kilham died in West Africa in 1832 on her way back to Sierra Leone after a visit to Liberia so she had had little time or opportunity to press forward with her ideas. These were far in advance of contemporary thinking, placing the African on the same intellectual level as the European at a time when slavery was only just being abolished. They would have provided an educational African elite at a time when few Africans had access even to elementary schools. They would also have been expensive to implement fully and it is difficult what could have been done without government help or considerable co-operation between the various missionary societies which, given the rivalry between them to gain converts, would have to wait until the beginning of the 20th century before there were real signs of the different denominations working together. Alison Twells has suggested that Kilham turned to Africa to ward off depression at lack of progress in England and that it offered the possibility of creating a new ordered world of 'civilised villages'.<sup>106</sup> She has also suggested that Kilham constructed for herself and other missionary women a maternal supervisory role.<sup>107</sup> Hannah Kilham was part of this process but there were many other missionary wives and widows who were also helping to develop this role. Hannah Kilham went from one project to another suggesting that she was still looking for her role in her life. She died, for example, returning from a visit to Liberia to see what she could do there. It is interesting to note that no women followed up her work on West African languages - this was left mostly to such CMS men as Samuel

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<sup>106</sup> Alison Twells, "'Let us begin well at home' class, ethnicity and Christian motherhood in the writing of Hannah Kilham, 1774-1834", in *Radical Femininity: women's self-representation in the public sphere* ed. by Eileen Janes Yeo (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp 25-51 (p. 46).

<sup>107</sup> Alison Twells, "'So Distant and Wild a Scene': language, domesticity and difference in Hannah Kilham's Writing from West Africa, 1822-1832", *Women's History Review*, 4:3 (1995), 301-318 (p. 312).

Crowther and S. W. Koelle with his *Polyglotta African*. The latter was a collection of vocabularies, phrases, varied geographical and cultural information concerning over 200 African groups in Freetown.<sup>108</sup> Subsequent women's efforts tended to be much more modest such as translating hymns, despite languages at home being seen as women's forte.

Missionary widows saw themselves as being in a superior position to spinsters. They considered that they could more easily dominate and control the African children in their care. Their physical attributes, particularly their dress and manner, assumed enormous importance. With women in general seen as having a special responsibility for those denied access to physical, moral and spiritual well-being, widows were seen as ideal to look after the liberated Africans in West Africa. British women were seen as having a unique duty to bring civilisation to the uncivilised, for example the urban poor or colonised people living in 'heathen lands'. Missionary widows were well placed to carry out this role, since they were already abroad, they were without family encumbrances and they were experienced. Missionary widows showed that women could survive on their own and make a worthwhile contribution to missionary work. They were in a sense a known quantity as they had already been in West Africa for some time with their husbands.

Missionary wives had to work much harder than ministers' wives at home who would have had the support of a circle of similarly minded women. As well as being a helpmeet for their husband with all that that implied in a part of the world where sickness was common, missionary wives were expected to provide a range of ancillary activities for women and children and in many cases they were also expected to teach. Most of them enjoyed the busy life. Some saw it as a way to gain their own salvation. Their attitudes towards their husbands' congregations were mixed but few of them seemed to enjoy visiting church members. On occasions they were able to take on new responsibilities unheard of at home and which were withdrawn when the occasion passed. Missionary widows seemed to have been judged to have passed

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<sup>108</sup> D. C. Okeke, 'Policy and Practice of the Church Missionary Society in Igboland, 1857-1929' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1977), p.7.

through a testing process and were able to assume much greater responsibility for missionary work in their own right. They helped to prepare the way for the single female missionary.

### III Single Female Missionaries

The CMS had received its first offers of service from unmarried women in 1815. There was some interest in sending them to India but the CMS decided that unmarried women should not go abroad, unless accompanying brothers.<sup>109</sup> Two unmarried women went out to Sierra Leone in 1819 as teachers. One went with her brother and married shortly afterwards whilst the other died soon after landing. In 1831 the CMS sent out the daughters of the Rev. Nylander to Sierra Leone to be teachers. On the Rev. Nylander's death in 1825 his two daughters had been brought to England to be educated at the Clergy Daughters' School at Kirby Lonsdale. The CMS considered that their natural ties lay in Sierra Leone and where 'an important sphere of usefulness was open' to them.<sup>110</sup> Whether they were consulted is not known. With no relations in England, the alternatives would have been for them to have become governesses or teachers. There was particular concern about Hannah whose academic achievements were described as modest but presumably not too modest for her to teach in Sierra Leone. They were to be schoolmistresses at a salary to be determined but in the region of £70-75, which was not ungenerous for those times. For example wages for a governess in England in 1850 ranged between £10 and £30 plus room and board.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore it was only in 1890 that the average range for women teachers reached £88.<sup>112</sup> The Nylander girls had problems in settling in Sierra Leone, in particular in getting on with the missionary families with whom they lived. The CMS had decided that they should not go to Freetown because of concerns about the morality of the place. The pair might have preferred this as it would have given them an opportunity for more social life. Anne Nylander married the Rev. Schon, the CMS linguist who took part in the Niger Expedition, and Hannah Nylander married the Rev. Edward

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<sup>109</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., I pp. 124-5.

<sup>110</sup> CMS Archives CA 1 L2 William Jowett to Hannah and Anne Nylander 16 November 1832.

<sup>111</sup> Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women* (London: John Murray, 1993), p. 164.

<sup>112</sup> Dina M. Copelmann, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism, 1870-1930* (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 75.



Jones, the American coloured principal of Fourah Bay College in Freetown. Both died in childbirth at the age of 25.

Miss Hehlen, who was in Sierra Leone from 1846-62 to assist at the Female Institution, decided to take orphans into a so-called 'Orphan Asylum for Girls', initially to train them for domestic service but later it seemed also as wives for African ministers. She received permission from the CMS Secretary provided that no expense fell on the CMS. However, due to her poor English it appeared that she was not particularly successful. There is a moving description in her journal of her Christmas celebrations for 1848 when she provided an illuminated 'Christmas tree' and presents for the seventeen children, perhaps as much a reminder of Christmas at home for herself as for the children.<sup>113</sup> Her timetable for her children included a considerable number of hours for instruction in sewing and knitting. A Miss Shepherd had sent her eight hundred small books for children which Miss Hehlen distributed on her visits to the poor and the sick with her children. In addition, the Dowager Lady Buxton had sent out Bibles for distribution. Miss Hehlen also ran a Sabbath school for women and children. When she left, the orphanage was taken over by the redoubtable Miss Sass who ran the Female Institute. It appeared that most of the girls admitted were not without friends or relatives and that the original purpose of the orphanage had been lost sight of so Miss Sass closed it. In addition there was some animosity towards the place because the idea of training girls for service, presumably with Europeans, was unpopular with the African ministers not to mention the girls themselves who would have had to live in and give up their own homes.

Miss Freymuth who went to Sierra Leone in 1860 and worked at the Female Institution for a while set up a scheme for Biblewomen. Biblewomen had been established in England in 1857 to sell Bibles and by 1862 there were Biblewomen in almost every town in England.<sup>114</sup> In 1861 Miss Freymuth had four women selling Bibles which she saw as the start of a female domestic mission but this was not

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<sup>113</sup> CMS Archives CA 1 0114 Journal Extracts of S. Hehlen for 25 March 1848.

<sup>114</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 124.

successful and she dismissed the women.<sup>115</sup> This was only part of her extensive activities. She had one African girl living with her and three day girls who came from 0900-1500 hours. She held a women's evening on Fridays which one hundred and ten attended. She also ran an afternoon Sunday school for women and girls as well as a Tuesday evening meeting. She was particularly concerned that women should not trade and pleased when she persuaded one woman to stop trading. She taught needlework in order to give the women an alternative to trading. She does not explain her reasons for objecting to women trading, in which she was not unusual among missionaries. She may have considered that this was not part of women's role and that it distracted them from responsibilities as a wife and mother. She may also have been aware that trading gave women much more economic independence and therefore less interest in the message which the missionaries brought with them.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the evangelization of the interior of Sierra Leone was seen as increasingly important, particularly among the Temne women. In 1894 a Miss Thornwell had been posted to Makemp to start this work under the supervision of the local missionary but she had died. The CMS decided to restart the work in 1903, using Mrs. Humphrey and Miss Wale. Mrs. Humphrey had taught at the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown and had then married a local missionary, the Rev. Humphrey, who had been killed and dismembered during the Hut Tax uprisings in 1897. The two women were posted to Makemp and the local missionary was withdrawn. It was felt that they would be safe there as the station was only a short day's walk from the next mission station at Port Lokkah. Leaving women to run a mission station on their own was for Sierra Leone at least - although not for other parts of West Africa - a new departure and reflected a newly found confidence in what women could achieve and also the more settled conditions in West Africa. Mrs. Humphrey had had to leave her two children behind in England and this, together with ill-health, prompted her to resign after nine months. This was the end of the experiment of having women only at a mission station as it was felt unsuitable for Miss Wale to remain on her own. She had started a night school for boys and girls and also undertaken some limited medical work. By this time female missionaries

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<sup>115</sup> CMS Archives CA 1 095 A. Freymuth to CMS Secretary 18 January 1862.

were receiving some medical training, following the opening of a training home for women candidates in Bermondsey to provide medical and missionary training. After such instruction Miss Wale was then placed at the Princess Christian Cottage Hospital in Freetown. This was partly supported by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and closely linked to the CMS which sometimes used it to provide further medical training for its female missionaries. At the hospital where Miss Wale was stationed as soon as Mrs. Humphrey left for England, she (Miss Wale) worked among the Temne people of the area. She died in 1906 with her funeral attended by the Temne king and one hundred and fifty of his people. The matron of the hospital wrote a warm-hearted and enthusiastic letter to the CMS Secretary about Miss Wale.<sup>116</sup>

The CMS had been steadily reducing its involvement in Sierra Leone following the establishment of the Native Church which was permanently recognised by the Articles of Arrangement adopted in 1890.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand it was steadily building up its presence in what was to become Nigeria. The Girls' Seminary in Lagos provided similar teaching opportunities to those at the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown and teachers were exchanged from time to time. Other schools were also established but one of the more successful ones was that run by Miss Warner of the CMS at Onitsha which had thirty-seven girls in 1899. A more detailed assessment of her work is included in Chapter V. Itinerating work - i.e. evangelising - is mentioned by a growing number of women missionaries from the end of the 19th century. It occupied a substantial part of their time although it was never their main occupation. For example Miss Wilson, also at Onitsha, wrote that she had spent 79 days evangelising in 1903.<sup>118</sup> The growing emphasis on evangelising appears to have arisen from the fear that Islam was gaining converts, more of a perceived threat in what was to become Nigeria than in Sierra Leone. It seems that female missionaries preached to both men and women. Some of the work sounds remarkably like Zenana work but it never seems to have been suggested that any of the Zenana societies

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<sup>116</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/O Miss Everard to CMS Secretary 22 August 1906

<sup>117</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, III p. 380.

<sup>118</sup> CMS Archives Extracts from Annual Letters of Missionaries for 1903 Miss Wilson to CMS Secretary 8th October 1903

should extend their activities to West Africa. Miss Grover writing from Ibadan in 1897 said that she was teaching the wives of the prince at Yematu in the women's quarters where no man was allowed.<sup>119</sup> Miss Tynan mentions visiting the palace of the king in Abeokuta to teach his wives. The *CM Intelligencer* of 1893 carried an article which included a reference to women preaching at Abeokuta.<sup>120</sup> The *CM Intelligencer* of 1904 had an article by Bishop Tugwell of the Niger entitled 'Women's Work on the Niger' which was an account of Miss Holbrook's itinerating among local women.<sup>121</sup> In the same issue there is an account of the evangelising by Miss Holbrook and Miss Wilson at Araba, where meetings were held twice daily with an average attendance of fifty. Miss Holbrook was one of the first women workers of the Niger Mission to be sent to work alone at an out-station. Teaching remained a very important part of the activities of single female missionaries but evangelising had become increasingly important. In contrast the WMMS was still not accepting the idea of female evangelists in 1919 when the WMMS General Superintendent of the Gold Coast rejected the idea of employing such a woman as being quite impractical.<sup>122</sup>

The WMMS had opened or been closely involved with four other secondary schools for girls - at Cape Coast and Accra in the Gold Coast, at Freetown in Sierra Leone and at Lagos. The support from the WMMS Women's Auxiliary for work in West Africa was never strong and India and the east always received priority. This made it almost inevitable that an alternative solution would have to be found if the Wesleyans were to educate girls. The WMMS turned to the deaconess order for its teachers. The first Methodist Deaconess Institute had been established in 1891 as a means of providing greater involvement for women in the church's activities. The training of deaconesses developed some of the attributes which missionary work required and they were probably no less ill-prepared than any other female missionaries sent out. In running the schools they were not only concerned with providing education but also in

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<sup>119</sup> CMS Archives Extracts from Annual Letters of Missionaries for 1897 Miss Grover to CMS Secretary dated simply November 1897.

<sup>120</sup> *CM Intelligencer* 'The Mission-Field, West Africa', December 1893 pp. 914-5.

<sup>121</sup> *CM Intelligencer* 'The Mission-Field, Western Equatorial Africa', September 1904, p. 692.

<sup>122</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Correspondence Gold Coast* Rev. Maud to WMMS Secretary 10 March 1919

‘training of character, domestic economy and health rules’.<sup>123</sup> Each school employed three deaconesses and at any one time one of them was on leave. As a result of this system and also of advances in medical knowledge, only one died, although some of the deaconesses were seriously ill. They seemed sympathetic to the girls in their charge, one writing that ‘the girls compare most favourably with English girls’, although there were criticisms that the girls were being taught to be imitations of English women. The Gold Coast synod of 1908 reported that ‘the experiment of the employment of Wesley Deaconesses having proved so successful to Cape Coast, the same agency will be brought into play at Accra’.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless there were problems with some of the deaconesses. One had pretended she had received three proposals of marriage and the Rev. Bartrop asked that she should not return after her home leave. Another deaconess had been seen going out with a married man, sitting on his lap and smoking. There was, however, general acceptance that the deaconesses worked hard in their schools so that the odd failing could be tolerated for a period until the deaconess returned to England.

Single women started to join the Qua Iboe Missions from the turn of the 19th century. Initially Samuel Bill, the head of the mission, had been in favour of this but grew less keen over time. It may have been that such an attitude was part of his misogyny as in 1909 he complained about the lack of feeling of a missionary wife, Mrs. Westgarth, when a woman who had received burns was being treated by Bill, and Mrs. Westgarth showed little concern. He also thought that she was no good at the work and he wondered what missionary women were coming to.<sup>125</sup> In 1909 he wrote in his journal that a Miss Anderson had become quite hysterical and would have to return home. Single women were thought vulnerable and were not allowed to run a mission station on their own so they either had to live with a married couple or live in pairs. Bill suggested that because at any one time one woman might be on leave it would be necessary to employ three women and provide a house. He conceded that they could have a few African girls living with them but suggested the number of girls wanting to do this would be small. In 1908 Bill described it as ‘foolish’ to think about sending

<sup>123</sup> Frank Deaville Walker, *The Call of the Dark Continent* (London: WMMS, 1915). p. 265,

<sup>124</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Gold Coast Synods* 28 February 1908.

<sup>125</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Society Archives D3301/DA/7 Samuel Bill’s Daily Journal 8 February 1909

out another single lady just to keep the resident one, a Miss Gordon, company - he would rather that she went home. However, earlier on he had described her as 'a really efficient helper' as well as being good at Efik, the local language, and with the local population.<sup>126</sup> In 1912 he felt that the main purpose in sending out single women was so that they could marry one of the missionaries. He thought it better to send out one man than two women. By 1915 his feelings against single female agents had hardened further. He wrote that men were much more valuable because they could be located anywhere.<sup>127</sup> He felt that there was no work that a single lady could do which a missionary wife could not undertake equally as well. This is in contrast to the view that missionary wives pressed for single women helpers to come out so that they, the wives, were not distracted from their domestic duties by having to teach, etc. Bill also felt that no married couple would want to have a single lady living with them at their station and this probably reflected the views of his fellow missionaries. For example, in 1912 the Smiths told him that they were not keen on having a lady helper but would take her if she came out. Bill was aware of the work by Mary Slessor in neighbouring Old Calabar and met her in 1909 at a meeting of all the missionaries in the area.<sup>128</sup> He had not seen her for some years and wrote in his daily journal that 'She is an old looking woman - but as quick and lively as ever'. She rode for part of the way on her bicycle with him. The reputation which she enjoyed does not seem to have influenced his views of single female missionaries. He may have seen her as so exceptional and possibly eccentric.

The Basel mission sent its first single female missionary, Mina Maurer, to the Gold Coast in 1857 to set up a system of religious instruction and education for children. She was joined shortly afterwards by another single female missionary, Katherine Rudi. Mina Maurer worked for thirty years in the Basel Mission's Girl's Boarding School in Abokobi in the Gold Coast. Her story has been recounted by Waltrud Haas but is worth recalling<sup>129</sup> Mina Maurer had been a governess in the family of the head

<sup>126</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Society Archives D3301/AG Samuel Bill to Secretary 30 August 1901

<sup>127</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Society Archives D3301/AA/5 Samuel Bill to Secretary 18 August 1915

<sup>128</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Society Archives D3301/DA/7 Samuel Bill's Daily Journal for 9 April 1909.

<sup>129</sup> Waltraud Haas & Ken Phin Pang, *Mission History from the Women's Point of View* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1989), p. 22.

of the Basel Mission, Inspector Josenhans, and had applied to serve with the Mission. Whether other women had asked to be considered for missionary work and had been rejected is not known but Mina Maurer seems to have used her position within the Josenhans family to get acceptance. She was experienced with working with children but had no other training, for example in teaching. In 1857 this was probably not too surprising. What her motives were in suggesting herself for this work are unknown. She remained unmarried throughout her life so it may be that she preferred to remain single in a post where she could have some authority and position in society. The intention was that she should turn the small girls' training institute, to which she was sent and which was being run by missionary wives, into a well-organised boarding school. A few months after her arrival, Katherina Rüdi was sent to join Mina Maurer. Katherina was a trained teacher and the intention was that she would develop the teaching side of the school whilst Maurer should be concerned with the upbringing of the children. They were both to be principals of the school. Although the Mission considered that the school had made good progress, certainly by 1860 when it moved to new buildings, the two women were constantly at loggerheads. Eventually Rüdi married a Basel missionary and moved away. Maurer had a strong personality and an exaggerated piety and the difficulties experienced in using her can be seen as a contributory factor as to why single women missionaries should not be used.<sup>130</sup> Male missionaries, however, quarrelled amongst themselves but there was never any question that their use should not be continued. Women had to prove their point, it seems.

### Mary Slessor

There can be few female missionaries of the 19th century about whom more has been written than Mary Slessor. In her lifetime and especially since her death in 1915 there has been a continuous stream of writing about her up to the present day, much of it hagiographic but some of it more critical. It is not difficult to see that she became a legend in her own lifetime. The story of the mill girl from Dundee living in a mud hut alone in a dangerous part of West Africa was exceptional and caught the imagination not just of those interested in missionary work. Books with titles like 'A Mill-Girl

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p. 22.



Who Conquered Cannibals' reinforced this message. Mary Slessor had the gift of empathising with the Africans whom she met, combined with an infectious enthusiasm which enabled her to overcome the obstacles placed in the way of her work. She became an icon whom few dared to criticise or assess. How far she provided a role model for women missionaries and what she did for African women are the main concerns here.

Not everyone shared a favourable view of her activities. Georgina Gollock, who had been the first person to run the women's section of the CMS at the end of the 19th century, wrote an article in 1916, just after Mary Slessor's death.<sup>131</sup> She suggested that one Mary Slessor would be enough for the average mission. The 'superabundance' of rescued black babies embarrassed her fellow workers and her ceaseless onward movement was not conducive to calm in mission councils. A further criticism, possibly seen as irrelevant today, was that men resented such actions. Her methods were seen as too personal and her way of life too haphazard to provide help for Africans.<sup>132</sup> She was seen as unfitted for teamwork and so fated to go it alone, which she may well have preferred. Such criticisms were unattributed but were likely to have come from her male colleagues as she was certainly not without women who were willing to follow her lead. Her friendship with Africans could be seen as developing a personality cult as many Africans who were her friends never converted. It was the case that Mary Slessor was an innovator and pioneer rather than a consolidator, with schools and churches being rapidly opened and just as quickly falling in to disuse because of inadequate support. One of her fellow missionaries wrote 'I could not commend her as a pattern to others. Had a man attempted to do what she has done, he would have had his throat cut.'<sup>133</sup> This was a reference to her extensive travelling and confrontation with Africans. There may have been an element of envy on the part of other missionaries. One of the problems was that it

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<sup>131</sup> G. A. Gollock, 'A Woman of France and A Woman of Scotland', *International Review of Missions*, (1916), 240-254 (p. 252)

<sup>132</sup> Carol Christian and Gladys Plummer, *God and One Redhead: Mary Slessor of Calabar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), p. 110.

<sup>133</sup> James Buchan, *The Expendable Mary Slessor* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), p. 151.

was difficult for those running the mission to control her. She was selective about acting on the advice given to her.

Mary Slessor was largely self educated, although the Foreign Mission Committee insisted that she spend three months at Moray House School in Edinburgh. She criticised this course as not being practical e.g. it did not show her how to build mud walls.<sup>134</sup> Later in life she attended a short course in nursing in Exeter. Mary Slessor suggested that 'a plain education with common sense and a warm heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise are the requisites for a missionary'.<sup>135</sup> She has been described as a young and impetuous missionary with something of the charisma of David Livingstone with whom she shared a common nationality and a similar background, bringing expansion and new life to the mission.<sup>136</sup> She seems to have shared Livingstone's conviction about the link between Christianity, civilisation and commerce. She was the first female magistrate in the British Empire, appointed in 1905, and also vice president of the Okoyong native court from 1905-9. Her involvement with the local Africans made her attractive to the colonial authorities as a magistrate, although it had been common for missionaries in early Sierra Leone to be magistrates. She believed that 'British rule is far and away the best thing for Africa and all subject races'.<sup>137</sup> Her colleagues were not in favour of her court work since they felt it interfered with her missionary duties. She acknowledged that the work took up a great deal of her time but her excellent knowledge of Efik, the local language, and also of local customs meant that she was sympathetic to the cases brought before her. She felt she could apply Christian principles to the administration of justice.<sup>138</sup> She became an honorary member of the all-male Ekpe society. Although this was seen by her male colleagues as the epitome of heathen ritual, she saw its value in caring for the less fortunate in society.<sup>139</sup> Mary Kingsley, the explorer

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<sup>134</sup> William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria 1846-1960* (London: Brill, 1996), p. 118.

<sup>135</sup> Mary Slessor 'Missionary Life as it really is', *Women's Missionary Magazine*, December 1916, p. 225.

<sup>136</sup> J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-91* (London: Longman, 1965), p. 95.

<sup>137</sup> J. H. Proctor, 'Serving God and the Empire: Mary Slessor in South Eastern Nigeria, 1876-1915', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 30 (2000), 45-61 (p. 46).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 55).

<sup>139</sup> William H. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

and ethnographer and also critic of missionary societies, visited Mary Slessor in 1893 at Okoyong and admired her great abilities.<sup>140</sup> She saw herself at the forefront of the expansion of the Mission's work.<sup>141</sup> Despite her image as being rough and thoroughly practical, she held the party line for Britain in her work. Her great enthusiasm for daring deeds in the service of empire and missions was founded in the Henty tradition of making such exploits fun.

Although seemingly not interested in secondary education for girls, Mary Slessor was anxious that African women should be able to support themselves as an alternative to marriage. The Hope Waddell Training Institute, opened in 1895, owed much to her efforts and soon earned high government praise.<sup>142</sup> For the female students who first came in 1898 it offered dress-making and tailoring, domestic science and for a brief period teacher training. Girls soon ceased to attend the Institute because, it is suggested, of the problems of co-education for adolescents. The girls then attended the Creek Town Institute. As early as 1881 Mary Slessor had begun to train local women to staff and run orphanages, teaching them domestic skills, elementary hygiene, first aid, singing and taking pride in one's own work and appearance.<sup>143</sup> This gave those women who were ostracised by society, such as the mothers of twins, an opportunity to earn a living and also provided a local source of labour for the orphanages. She was able to achieve much on very slender resources, starting a small hospital which also trained women as nurses, a women's refuge for women fleeing their husbands, and a home for women and girls where the women were taught dress-making and how to make baskets. She also bought land where women could learn farming. In a recent assessment of her work, she has been described as 'a social worker, a builder of schools and medical centres, a brilliant negotiator with Nigerian chiefs, a preacher, a story teller and a deliverer of down to earth judgements in court'.<sup>144</sup> For African women her aim, as described in an article by her in the *Women's Missionary Magazine*, was to make them 'something more than a mere

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<sup>140</sup> Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 74.

<sup>141</sup> Mary Slessor 'Our Missionary Mail-bag - Old Calabar', *Women's Missionary Magazine* January 1906 p.20.

<sup>142</sup> William H. Taylor, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>143</sup> James Buchan, *The Expendable Mary Slessor* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), p. 74.

<sup>144</sup> William H. Taylor, op. cit., p. 132.

creature to be exploited and degraded by man'.<sup>145</sup> Her work at saving twins and their mother and getting them accepted in society was a major humanitarian effort. Although twin killing had in theory been banned since 1878, it was difficult to enforce this rule in the bush so it was still necessary for Mary Slessor to make her mercy dashes.

Although Mary Slessor was by no means the last female missionary to be sent out with very limited formal training, the days of the untrained female missionary were coming to an end by 1880. In the 1880s/90s the CMS was using The Willows and The Olives for training its female missionaries and also opened its own training home at Highbury. The Women's Foreign Mission Committee in Scotland started its training centre for women in 1897. Whilst Mary Slessor was keen on opening schools, these were at primary level. She showed little interest in promoting secondary schools for girls. Limited resources meant that there would have been major difficulties in finding adequately qualified staff since these would have to have been African teachers if costs were not to escalate. She may not have appreciated the value to girls of secondary education because of her own lack of formal education. However African girls needed secondary education if they were to advance. It has to be said also that any education was better than none at all.

An article in the *Women's Missionary Magazine* claimed that Mary Slessor had been an inspiration to Scottish women to become missionaries.<sup>146</sup> Her work immediately after her death was carried by four protégés.<sup>147</sup> It has also been suggested that recruitment to Calabar from Scotland depended largely on the reputation of Mary Slessor for fifty years after her death but there is no means of confirming this assertion. For some the hair shirt that Mary Slessor chose in the form of no shoes, mud huts, etc., would have been an attraction. Others would have been put off, particularly where the consent of parents was sought. Mary Slessor created her own

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<sup>145</sup> Miss Slessor *Women's Missionary Magazine* January 1908 p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> Reports from the Field, 1917, Africa *Women's Missionary Magazine* September 1918 p. 109.

<sup>147</sup> Rosalind I. J. Hackett, 'Beyond Afternoon Tea: Images and Roles of Missionary Women in Old Calabar', in Philip M. Kulp, ed., *Women Missionaries and Cultural Change* (Williamsburg: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary, 1987), pp. 47-54 (p. 52).

space and few could hope to emulate her, however much they might aspire to. The missionary selection process would probably have excluded most women like Mary Slessor who would have been seen as too disruptive to the work. She had proved her worth working for the church in Dundee where she had less scope for individual action and was closely overseen. In the missionary field she was less controllable, for example she did not attend mission council meetings regularly nor send the necessary reports to Edinburgh. She took advantage of the acclaim she had won for her work to get out of such responsibilities. Nor was she particularly successful in winning converts.<sup>148</sup> Most missionary societies sought unquestioning obedience from their workers and the sort of autonomy which Mary Slessor achieved did not fit in with this. Although her contribution to missionary work was outstanding, it was also very mixed, reflecting her complex character. What she achieved can be seen more as a personal triumph than a missionary achievement.

#### IV Conclusions

Women provided a further dimension to the work of the missionary societies in West Africa. Whether they were wives, widows or single female agents, they had their own contribution to make. Since the duties for women, unlike those for men, were often not specified in any great detail, they had opportunities, within constraints, to decide how their time would be occupied. For wives there is little doubt that their primary occupation was to be a helpmeet but within the bounds of marriage they could negotiate space in which to pursue activities both inside and outside the home. If they were widowed they could, if the missionary society was willing, continue with these activities. Single female agents followed in the footsteps of the wives and widows. Without the encumbrances of a family, they were able to take a much more active part in missionary work, particularly as they were likely to be better educated and to have received some training in missionary work.

Education was a primary concern of the women who went overseas. Whether they went specifically as teachers or not they were soon involved in teaching, either in their

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<sup>148</sup> J. H. Proctor, 'Serving God and the Empire: Mary Slessor in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1876-1915', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 30 (2000), 45-61 (p. 58).

own home or at a school. Some were very successful at this, like the Wesleyan deaconesses who ran a secondary school for girls. They provided an education for African girls which it would not have been acceptable for men to give. The provision of healthcare was also seen as something which women could do, although often as an assistant to a husband or a doctor at a medical mission. The mission as a place of sanctuary was reinforced by the presence of women and it would have been difficult for male missionaries to take in small children and women. All missionaries shared an abhorrence of twin killings but it is likely that the presence of female missionaries gave more importance to this role, particularly through the setting up of homes for such children. Given the opportunity, women slipped easily into the role of running establishments, sometimes on a large scale. Towards the end of the 19th century they were able to undertake itinerating and preaching, although there were limits to what they could do. Although initially such work was aimed at African women, the missionary women were able to extend this to more general preaching. Mostly they were not active in language work. Some were good at learning the local languages but there was little attempt at translating or codifying such languages. Translation work required an intimate knowledge of the indigenous people which may have been thought inappropriate for women to acquire.

Possibly because they kept within acceptable bounds, there was not a great deal of open opposition to the work of women in the mission field. Obstacles were placed in their way, for example, single women could not run a station on their own. There either had to be two women or also a married couple. Some thought that single women were a nuisance and preferred to have one man instead of two women. For the most part, women, like their male counterparts avoided confrontation with the colonial authorities but there were one or two exceptions where they felt strongly enough about a situation to make a voluble protest.

Missionary women went to West Africa with the aim of bringing the Christian religion to the inhabitants and all that that implies in terms of changing values and customs. How far they were practising some kind of maternal feminism is open to debate. Their reaction to the local inhabitants is explored in more detail in Chapter

VI. It is difficult to generalise on how they viewed Africans. There were many attempts to ameliorate their lot by helping to provide a sanctuary and by changing local customs. Few of them said about African women 'To me she has been a true sister'.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless missionary women helped to establish women's networks by arranging conferences and meetings, perhaps a more difficult task than realised in West Africa and helped to promote contacts among African women.

Hannah Kilham, Anna Hinderer and Mary Slessor are the names which are forever associated with missionary work in West Africa. Both in their time and afterwards their contribution to the work has been acknowledged. Kilham's linguistic work and the establishment of schools in the Gambia and Sierra Leone were pioneering efforts in the first quarter of the 19th century. Mary Slessor was a pioneer too, providing it has been suggested the inspiration for others to become missionaries. Both these women were highly talented and energetic with a firm sense of what they wanted to do and were determined to do what they saw as the way forward. The missionary societies could tolerate some women like this and could benefit from them but it is difficult to see that they provided exemplars for others to follow. Missionary women were in general consolidators rather than innovators and they fell more in the mould of Anna Hinderer than Hannah Kilham or Mary Slessor.

There were many reasons why women (and men) were attracted to working overseas. Missions provided opportunities for women which were often not available at home. Mission service combined the attractions of adventure, career and calling for single women especially.<sup>150</sup> Success on the mission field by the end of the 19th century was no longer measured by the number of converts.<sup>151</sup> There was much more emphasis on the remoulding of society in providing the base from which conversion would follow but in a longer time frame. This was to the advantage of women. Whilst they remained for the most part in the shadow of the male missionaries, the domestic ideal

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<sup>149</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Society Archives D3301/GC/9 From Darkness to Light 1908.

<sup>150</sup> Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 59.

<sup>151</sup> Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), p. 130.



was stretched to provide novel opportunities which they exploited.<sup>152</sup> The baton of the pioneering missionary wives at the beginning of the 19th century passed to the better trained and more educated single female missionaries of the late 19th century, as missionary work became more professionalized. They were able to extend the opportunities open to them further, albeit within the constraints of a cause which remained firmly controlled by men.

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<sup>152</sup> Mary Taylor Huber & Nancy C. Lutkehaus, 'Introduction: Gendered Missions at Home and Abroad', in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* ed. by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 1-38 (p. 19).

## **Chapter IV The Annie Walsh Memorial School, Freetown, Sierra Leone:**

### **Secondary Education for Women by Women**

#### **I Background**

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was heavily involved in education almost from the start of its work in Sierra Leone in 1804. Its responsibilities increased as the result of the abolition of the slave trade after 1807 when the liberated Africans, as they became known, were released from the slaving ships which had been intercepted and landed in Sierra Leone where the colonial government assumed responsibility for them. Provision of schools for the children was largely handed over to the CMS which was recompensed by the government. Such education was limited to primary education i.e. up to the age of 12 when the children could then become apprenticed within the colony. For girls, such apprenticeship meant being a servant until they married. Mrs. Melville, wife of a Commissary Judge serving in Freetown, recorded in 1841 that she had taken on a liberated slave child as an apprentice and had agreed to instruct her ‘... in the English language, the principles of the Christian religion and useful personal domestic duties’.<sup>1</sup> She also took on a boy to wait at table.

The first schools in West Africa were modelled on English charity schools.<sup>2</sup> Ekechi has suggested that formal education was ‘... the bait with which the young generation was enticed to Christianity.’<sup>3</sup> It was certainly not long before the CMS began to think about the need to provide secondary education for both boys and girls. Such education was not funded by the colonial government. The CMS therefore either had to ensure that it could bear the costs of such schools or that they were self-supporting (except for the salaries of the European teachers) or received other funding. For example in 1847 several boys at the Boys’ Grammar School in Freetown were

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Helen Melville, *A Residence at Sierra Leone* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Colin George Wise, *A History of Education in British West Africa* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1956), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Felix K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1972), p. 176.

maintained at a cost of £150 a year by the Native Agency Committee.<sup>4</sup> Educated men were needed to work for the colonial government, although how many was another question, whereas there were no similar opportunities at the time for girls.

Education for girls in the first half of the nineteenth century in England beyond primary level was very much in its infancy. North London Collegiate School opened in 1850 and Cheltenham Ladies College in 1853, for example. Mostly such education as girls received was provided by parents or more likely governesses concerned with developing abilities in music, drawing and French which were seen as helping a girl's marriage prospects. The vast majority of parents wanted their daughters to grow up as decorative, modest and above all marriageable beings.<sup>5</sup> The CMS was being innovatory in instituting secondary education for girls, not just those from wealthy homes. How the CMS drew the line between primary and secondary education is difficult to say but it would seem that the primary education provided was fairly basic. A little more is known about what was provided at secondary level, particularly towards the end of the 19th century, when specimen examination questions have been preserved.

Secondary education for girls in Freetown was very much the concern of women for women. Of necessity all the teachers, whether African or European, were female as were the members of the committee which had the oversight of the school. In this chapter, four aspects of such education are looked at. Possibly the single most significant influence on the school were the teachers whom the CMS sent out. Important aspects of their influence were the ways in which they developed their role, how they were regarded by other missionaries and their own attitudes. This is the first theme which is examined in this chapter. The headmistresses had a major responsibility for the development of the curriculum and the school's involvement in external examinations show in some measure the success of the school. This is the second theme which is looked at. Not least in importance were the girls who attended

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<sup>4</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M13 Rev. T. Peyton's Report of the Sierra Leone Grammar School for the 25 March 1847.

<sup>5</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 43.

the school and what they did after leaving school and this is the third theme which is discussed. The final and fourth theme looks at the role of the all female visiting committee of the school and the way in which its members carried out their responsibilities for managing the school. To some extent it is necessary to see how secondary education was provided for boys in Sierra Leone and how this compared with that for girls. This is a strand which runs through all the four themes.

## II The Early Years 1845-49

It has been suggested that the origins of the CMS involvement in providing secondary education for girls in Freetown dates from 1816 when a school was started in Charlotte for eight girls who were mainly taught handicrafts.<sup>6</sup> In 1845 it transferred to Regent, which was more central, where it became known by the rather grim title of the Female Institution. Initially the school consisted of one room in a mission house where the pupils ate, slept and were taught. It was then under the direction of a Miss Morris who stayed for a brief period only before marrying the Rev. Smith, a local missionary. She was under the supervision of Mrs. Denton, wife of one of the local missionaries. The replacement for Miss Morris was not made without some controversy. It was eventually decided to make more radical changes to the running of the Female Institution and to move it to Freetown under the direction of a Miss Hehlen in 1846. She was German and there were derogatory comments by the Rev. Young about her grasp of English. However, her written reports are clearly written and do not indicate any deficiencies in her written English. It seems more likely that there was dissatisfaction with Miss Hehlen generally. Mrs. Beale, the Rev. Beale's wife, had been asked by the local missionaries to give advice and direction to Miss Hehlen on running the school which she refused to accept.<sup>7</sup> In the event two of the local missionaries were asked to make the peace. There was general dissatisfaction at the time with the school. This is hardly surprising since the premises were very inadequate, resembling a dame's school in which the pupils also slept. This was in contrast with the grammar school which in 1845 had thirty pupils in two divisions. Miss Hehlen was dissatisfied with her pupils. In June 1847 she said that, of two

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<sup>6</sup> *Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989 - School's Register and History*, nd., p. vii.

<sup>7</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M13 Rev. Young to CMS Secretary 9 September 1847.

recent entrants, one was a very weak character and the other ‘uncultivated’. She also deplored the indifference of two of Samuel Crowther’s daughters. In her report of June 1848 she recalled that the children had returned from the school holidays very dirty. Such criticisms of indigenous people are not uncommon. Nevertheless in the first ever examination of the fourteen girls in September 1848 there was satisfaction with their progress in Bible history, the catechism, grammar, arithmetic and geography. The needlework was pronounced excellent and the Institution commended.<sup>8</sup> The small number of girls being educated at the Female Institution compares with 1,274 girls who were in CMS day schools in 1847.<sup>9</sup>

An African assistant ‘schoolmistress’, the expression used in the Rev. Beale’s report of June 1846, was appointed to instruct the girls in washing and ironing. These duties suggest that her post had little intellectual content. Each married missionary and catechist was required to take 2-3 young females to train as schoolmistresses for which they were paid 10 shillings per month for food and clothes.<sup>10</sup> One of these would have been appointed as the assistant schoolmistress.

The school regulations agreed for the school at this time, essentially by the local male missionaries but presumably in agreement with the headmistress, provided for instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic plus geography, history and general information. Needlework, grammar, music, drawing and French were available as extras and would have been taught by the headmistress. It was stressed that any fancy work was to be regarded as a recreation only and that plain needlework was to be considered of the first importance. All the girls were required to take their turn at household duties. It was noted that the girls were learning to cook at the insistence of the local missionaries. Such requirements suggest that the local missionaries felt that the girls were to occupy rather humble positions in later life. A theme which emerged from the discussions by the local missionaries about the girls’ education was that it was seen as more important in relation to the boys being educated by the CMS than

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<sup>8</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Rev. Haastrup’s journal for the quarter ending 25 December 1848.

<sup>9</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M13 Report on the State of the C. M. Society’s Day Schools in the colony of Sierra Leone by the Rev. C. T. Ehemann and T. Peyton, the Society’s Inspectors for the year 1847.

<sup>10</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M12 Rev. Beale’s Report for June 1846.

education for the girls *per se*. If the girls were uneducated then the boys might sink to their level when they married. There were fears that the numbers at the Female Institution were too small (for example in 1848 there were twelve, although at the same time there were only six boys at the Grammar School) to provide educated wives for all the boys in Sierra Leone. This was seen as particularly pressing as the plans for the Africanisation of the local church developed with the corresponding need for African ministers.

### III The European Teachers

In the first few years of its existence, that is between 1845 and 1849 at which date a forceful and energetic headmistress was appointed, the Female Institution was in a difficult position. Not only was it a pioneering body with the problems of deciding who to admit and what to teach but the first two headmistresses stayed for short periods only and the Institution was accommodated in makeshift accommodation. Much of this was to change with the appointment of Miss Sass as headmistress in 1849. She remained there until 1869, although with some extensive breaks in England. The willingness of highly motivated women teachers to go abroad has been commented on by others.<sup>11</sup> In Miss Sass's case there was the added incentive of missionary work.

Miss Sass has been described as 'one of the noblest of the Society's [i.e. CMS] female missionaries'.<sup>12</sup> Another description is 'a formidable, energetic lady of deep Christian faith'.<sup>13</sup> She headed the Female Institution in Freetown, Sierra Leone from its earliest days and oversaw its move to new buildings in 1866. Even after her retirement in 1869 she continued to provide advice to the CMS. Her brief obituary in the *Gleaner* of 1891 said that she had never ceased to help the cause by her interest and sympathy.<sup>14</sup> The Female Institution was served by several long standing

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<sup>11</sup> Joyce Goodman, '“Their Market Value must be Greater for the Experience they had gained”: Secondary School Headmistresses and Empire 1897-1914', in *Gender, Colonialism and Education: The Politics of Experience*, ed. by Joyce Goodman & Jane Martin (London: Woburn Press, 2002), pp. 175-198 (p. 176).

<sup>12</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), II p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: OUP, 1962), p. 253.

<sup>14</sup> *CM Gleaner* 1891, p. 125.

headmistresses, with Miss Sass serving for 21 years, Miss Caspari for 13 years and Miss Bissett for 20 years (plus her years as a teacher at the school).

Miss Sass's lasting contributions to the education of girls in West Africa were the erection of new buildings for the Female Institution in Freetown and the rapid expansion in numbers of pupils. There was constant pressure from her to the Secretary of the CMS urging the need for the Institution to be housed adequately. How far she was involved in the planning of the new buildings is not clear. In the early 1860s she was back in England on leave and this was probably the time when the plans for the new Institution were being finalised. She commented in 1864 that the new buildings were badly planned so presumably she had not been consulted. The building was 50 feet by 20 feet on two floors with an open piazza in the middle. On either end of the first floor was a schoolroom and a dormitory. There was another classroom on the ground floor plus a dining room. The new building had been made possible by the gift of £1,000 from an anonymous English donor and £2,200 collected by the Rev. and Mrs. Walsh of Warminster, Wiltshire in memory of their daughter. (See Chapter V). These were considerable sums and reflected the concern in Britain for female education in West Africa. Without these gifts it is possible that the Institution would have to wait for some time for the CMS to fund the project and possibly not so lavishly. The formal opening in 1866 was a major event in Freetown. The CMS is likely to have wanted to show what it was doing for education, particularly for girls, and to ensure that the new facilities were widely advertised to attract pupils. 300 people were invited, including the Governor, although in the end he was absent and rain reduced the numbers present to 150.<sup>15</sup> Despite her earlier criticisms, Miss Sass commented that the new building was one of the best and most commodious in Sierra Leone. The Ladies Visiting Committee, initially comprised of missionary wives, set the fees subject to the agreement of the CMS. The Institution accommodated 50 pupils soon after its opening and they were a mixture of boarders and day girls, although Miss Sass preferred boarders. By 1869 there were 42 boarders and 20 day pupils. It has been suggested that, although girls' boarding schools claimed to encourage both family ties and family-like behaviour, in fact they

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<sup>15</sup> CMS Archives CA1 0187 Report of the CM Female Institution January 1866.



encouraged behaviour antithetical to the traditional family.<sup>16</sup> In Sierra Leone the need to teach children away from their family surroundings was seen as essential in order to provide them with a Christian upbringing.

Initially Miss Sass was the only European at the Institution but a Miss Wilkinson joined her in 1854 and 1855. Miss Sass described Miss Wilkinson as a great comfort. Miss Wilkinson thought that the African assistant teachers required as much looking after as the girls themselves. A public examination of the girls took place in November 1854 with nine missionaries and African ministers plus their wives present so the examination was likely to have been seen as an important occasion and an opportunity for the teachers at the Institution to show how their work had progressed with the girls.

From 1858-1863 Miss Sass was assisted by Miss Bywater who later married the Rev. Brierley, a CMS missionary in Sierra Leone. Miss Sass considered that Miss Bywater lacked sound judgement and was unable to control the assistant teachers. She also thought Miss Bywater punished the girls too severely, although no details are given. Miss Sass said that she preferred to reprove the girls. Given that corporal punishment was in keeping with the practices and beliefs of contemporary society, Miss Sass showed an enlightened attitude.<sup>17</sup> The ultimate sanction for unacceptable conduct was expulsion and this happened from time to time. Miss Sass wrote from England in 1861 that the sooner Miss Bywater was married (and thus left the Female Institution) the better.<sup>18</sup> In 1865 two ladies, Miss Adcock and Miss Caspari, joined the Institution. Due to ill-health Miss Adcock's stay was brief but Miss Caspari eventually succeeded Miss Sass. When Miss Sass joined the Female Institution in 1849, the timetable consisted of writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar and scripture lessons. In 1856 Miss Sass wrote that the girls rose at 5 a.m. to start their household work, followed by a short period of study before breakfast. The main

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<sup>16</sup> Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> James Walvin, *A Child's World* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> CMS Archives CA1 0187 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 27 February 1861.

teaching was from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. so the girls received a considerable amount of formal tuition combined with some practical work.

Miss Sass often refers to her pupils as 'sable scholars' and 'heathens'. Her attitudes towards them were mixed. Mrs. Rhodes, wife of the Rev. Rhodes who himself was secretary of the visiting committee, felt that Miss Sass underestimated her pupils' abilities. Mrs. Rhodes, whilst praising Miss Sass's teaching abilities, felt that she was deficient in neatness and order.<sup>19</sup> The school was growing in numbers at the time and Miss Sass may have considered that it was more important to look after the girls rather than the buildings. When she returned to England for a while in 1860 she took two orphan girls with her in order to give them a training in a national school in England. Her aims generally for the girls were to make them 'quiet sensible housewives'.<sup>20</sup> She considered Sarah Forbes Bonetta, the Dahomian girl in whom Queen Victoria took a considerable interest, to be growing into 'a nice intelligent child'.<sup>21</sup> (See Chapter I) When Miss Sass left the Institution finally in 1869 she took a further two girls back to England in order for them to be trained as teachers. She, herself, supported several girls at the Institution. Miss Sass did not reveal much about what happened to the girls after they left the Institution. Several of them married African ministers, including two of Samuel Crowther's daughters.

Although no African women were ever appointed as teachers at the Institution, it did employ several as assistants and some of the older girls were appointed as monitors. Kezzia Grant, educated in England, was appointed in 1855.<sup>22</sup> Miss Jones, the daughter of the Rev. Jones, a black American and principal of the Fourah Bay College, was employed from 1856-9 as an assistant teacher but initially Miss Sass felt that she needed much directing. Presumably Miss Sass felt that she had been successful in this because by June 1858 she commented that Miss Jones was becoming more useful. When she died in 1859, the comment was that she had

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<sup>19</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Mrs. Rhodes to CMS Secretary 19 May 1851.

<sup>20</sup> CMS Archives CA1 0187 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 19 December 1865.

<sup>21</sup> CMS Archives CA1 0187 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 3 August 1852.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: OUP, 1962), p. 365.

improved a great deal.<sup>23</sup> In 1852 she praised Sarah Marsh, her African assistant, without whom she considered she could not have continued to run the Institution. Apparently she had recently had to dismiss one assistant for bad behaviour. One of Samuel Crowther's daughters was also an assistant teacher in 1849 before leaving to marry the Rev. Nicol, the second African minister to be ordained in West Africa.

Miss Sass maintained a robust attitude towards the other CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone. She asked the CMS Secretary to make it clear to the local missionaries that she was head and superintendent of the Female Institution but it is not clear how, if at all, he responded to her request. She was severely critical of the Rev. Nicol for expecting her to take his two daughters as monitors. However she was full of praise for the Rev. Maxwell who was the third African to be ordained in Sierra Leone. In 1865 she wrote to the CMS Secretary saying that she would be glad if the Bishop of Sierra Leone, Dr. Beckles, who was Bishop from 1860-69, would not return to the country.

Miss Sass clearly enjoyed a close relationship with Henry Venn, the long-standing Secretary of the CMS. He had asked her to write to him direct on matters concerning the Institution. She felt free to write to him directly not only about the Female Institution but on other matters, for example, her comment on Bishop Beckles of Sierra Leone that she felt it better that he should not return to Sierra Leone. Apparently he spent much of his time outside of the colony. In her letters she strikes what seems to be just the right note of self deprecation and humility whilst at the same putting her views very forcefully. She was responsible for relocating the Institution to its new buildings and for expanding the number of pupils. She provided the basis on which it was able to build for the rest of the century. Although she appreciated the contribution which Africans could make to teaching at the school, she never recommended that any should be appointed as teachers and they always remained assistant teachers. The problem was perhaps that no suitable teacher training for women was available in Freetown although some girls were sent to England. This contrasts with the Boys' Grammar School in Freetown, a much larger school, where

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<sup>23</sup>CMS Archives CA1 0187 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 19 August 1859.

there was a tradition of African principals for much of the second half of the 19th century.<sup>24</sup> However the Fourah Bay Institute in Sierra Leone provided teacher training for men and promising students were able to complete their education in England. Miss Sass did not die a heroine's death in the service of the CMS in West Africa. She was seriously ill there but returned to England in 1869 to live for a further 22 years, still writing to the CMS as an 'eminence grise' until her death. Her obituary in the *Gleaner* in 1891 was very restrained and did not reflect the contribution which she had made to the development of secondary education for girls in West Africa.

When Miss Sass left at the end of 1868, she arranged for Mrs. Caiger to take over the school. She was the wife of a local missionary who had died two years earlier. It seems that the intention was that she would run the school only until the CMS could send out someone from England. The two teachers who were sent out were not a great success. A further replacement died after eighteen months' service. The CMS Secretary continued to record the high esteem in which work among girls was regarded by the Society. In 1871 in a valedictory letter to two teachers going out to the school, he wrote saying that their work was regarded, in some respects as the most important department of the Society's operations in Sierra Leone.<sup>25</sup> He explained that the education and mental development of women there had been below those of the men. This was injuring the church, especially the growth of the native church which needed Christian mothers to lay the foundations of religion to the rising generation, reflecting the view of Samuel Smiles that 'One good mother was worth a hundred schoolmasters'.<sup>26</sup> In the charged atmosphere of a small boarding school, it was essential that the staff should be compatible. In fact the supply of those wishing to go to West Africa was limited and it seemed that the CMS was happy just to find someone who seemed to be qualified and was prepared to serve in Sierra Leone. Eventually a Miss Caspari was sent out, remaining for thirteen years before returning in 1878 suffering from a large tumour and dropsy from which she recovered and went on to serve in Japan. Mrs. Caiger wrote to the CMS secretary that 'Miss Caspari has thoroughly gained the confidence of both parents and pupils. She is a good

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<sup>24</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., III p. 377.

<sup>25</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L8 CMS Secretary to departing teachers 20 October 1871.

<sup>26</sup> Carol Dyhouse, op. cit., p. 79.

disciplinarian and at the same time, kind and forgiving and has their [i.e. the girls'] welfare at heart'.<sup>27</sup> Miss Casperi died in Japan in 1888, and was described as '... a ray of cloudless sunshine in our circle'.<sup>28</sup>

Compared with the male missionaries and their wives, it may seem surprising that few of the teachers sent out died in service - one in Freetown and two shortly after being invalided home. When the teachers fell ill, they felt able to leave their post in order to recover whilst the missionaries might have felt themselves to be indispensable.

During the school holidays the teachers were also able to take some sort of holiday even if they were not able to leave Sierra Leone. A missionary wife possibly did not want to be separated from her husband so she may have stayed on even when a return to England on the grounds of ill-health might have been advisable. Wives also died when giving birth. Ill-health was sometimes used as a reason for not sending a teacher back to Sierra Leone from England whereas the real reason was that her colleagues and/or the local missionaries did not feel she was suitable to work at the school. Therefore some of those whose health was perhaps not particularly good were spared a further tour of duty in the difficult climate of Sierra Leone.

In 1878 after the departure of Miss Caspari, the CMS appointed Mr and Mrs. Burton to run the school. He was an American Congregationalist but worked as a CMS lay worker in Sierra Leone. Mrs. Burton occupied the position of matron and bursar to the school rather than actually teaching. Mr. Burton made some alterations to the school buildings. One such alteration meant that the Burtons and the boarders could now take their meals together, implying that this had not been the case before. This is likely to have meant that the Burtons were content with an African diet since it would have been too expensive to provide the boarders with European style food. The significance of a man and woman eating together would not have been lost on the girls. Such an arrangement can be seen as a litmus test of civilisation. The Burtons were energetic in pressing for further, and presumably more expensive, alterations to the building, including bedrooms for the girls instead of dormitories. The Burtons

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<sup>27</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M20 Mrs. Caiger to Rev. Wright 22 October 1875

<sup>28</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, III p. 603.

stayed at the school until July 1883, although spending part of their time at the Fourah Bay Institute but there were increasing problems. A teacher was taken on who, it was alleged, had been sacked from the Wesleyan Girls' School and who was eventually sent back to England.<sup>29</sup> Another teacher at the school complained about the Burtons' attitude towards the native teachers, namely that the Burtons took the teachers to task over nothing and behaved badly towards them.<sup>30</sup>

Their successor at the school was a Miss Ansell who as a teacher at the school had been strongly critical of Mrs. Burton. She had given an ultimatum to the CMS that she would leave unless Mrs. Burton went. Mrs. Burton, for her part, was upset that Miss Ansell was so unfriendly towards her.<sup>31</sup> At the time of Miss Ansell's appointment the school was expanding and an additional African teacher was appointed as well as a pupil teacher. Music continued to grow in importance and 1884 Miss Ansell said that she needed five pianos. Miss Ansell, herself, played the harmonium at Holy Trinity Church. A letter in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* welcomed women as church organists and asked when they were to be allowed to work as clerks.<sup>32</sup> By March 1885 new dormitories had been completed with accommodation for forty-five pupils and five teachers. The school received a loan of £400 from the CMS to help with the cost. Miss Ansell did not enjoy good health in Freetown and at the end of 1884 she went to Madeira taking with her one of the African teachers, a widow, Mrs. Brown (the sister-in-law of Archdeacon Johnson) with whom she shared a room at the school. Later, on return from leave in England, she decided that the climate was too much for her and resigned. She appeared to get on well with the African teachers saying that the head African teacher was much better than a European lady and she would rather no more Europeans were sent out. This suggestion was not acceptable because someone had to run the school during her absence on holiday, for example, and there was no chance of an African being asked to do this. Her advice to a teacher who was sent out to join the school was to bring a bath chair as it was impossible for European ladies to walk more than short distances,

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<sup>29</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/0 Rev. Macauley to Mr. Lang, CMS Secretary 18 March 1882.

<sup>30</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/0 Alice H. Ansell to CMS Secretary 13 March 1883.

<sup>31</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/0 D. W. Burton to CMS Secretary 7 July 1883.

<sup>32</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 21 March 1885 p. 4.

indicating that Miss Ansell, herself, did not enjoy the best of health. A bath chair was duly sent out in 1886. Later on the CMS ladies were encouraged to ride bicycles so the climate was obviously not bad enough to prevent cycling. When she finally left in 1887 she was presented with an address given to her by the teachers and pupils at the school which began 'Our Esteemed Lady Principal' which, it is to be hoped, was a genuine reflection of what the writers felt about Miss Ansell.

Miss Henderson, who had been in India and who was presumably experienced at CMS work, succeeded Miss Ansell in 1888. She wrote to the CMS Secretary asking for a harmonium.<sup>33</sup> She also referred to an impending concert at the school at which the girls '... will be thumping on pianos and screaming at the top of their voices'. She also felt their pronunciation was bad. How far this was a criticism of the girls or was intended to show how little her predecessor had achieved is difficult to say. Miss Henderson was interested in expanding the range of teaching given by the school and was given approval by the school's visiting committee to open a kindergarten to admit 4 year olds. If necessary she was prepared to have it run by an African lady but the kindergarten never took off. Curiously Miss Henderson complained of having too little to do. She occupied herself partly by taking Arabic lessons. She was designated principal but her colleague, Miss Bissett, was the head teacher. Without very clear guidelines from the visiting committee and a high degree of co-operation between the two women, some conflict was inevitable and the Rev. Moore had to intervene to make the peace. There were still major problems at the school at the time with poor examination results and an uprising in which a constable had to be called in to make the peace.<sup>34</sup> Miss Henderson left in October 1889, having been criticised by the local missionaries and amid rumours that she was not responsible for her actions. Miss Sass, still involved in the affairs of the school, although she had left Sierra Leone twenty years earlier, wrote to the CMS Secretary from her home in North Kensington suggesting that Miss Henderson had suffered because her every action had been commented on by the staff and that the principal should have full control of the

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<sup>33</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Henderson to CMS Secretary 29 October 1889.

<sup>34</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Henderson to CMS Secretary 21 August 1888.



school. The new principal, Miss Dunkley, stayed with Miss Sass before departing for Sierra Leone so Miss Sass's influence lived on.

By 1891 the school was becoming overcrowded with 48 boarders and 36 day girls. The Rev. Humphrey wrote to say that four of the boarders had to sleep in the lavatory.<sup>35</sup> He may, however, have exaggerated the circumstances in order to make his case more pressing. Furthermore the girls needed somewhere to exercise where the neighbouring young men could not watch them. In 1890 there had been a special appeal in England to pay off the debts of the school which raised £362 whilst the debt was £196. This money was in hand for new buildings which were estimated to cost £1200 for which the school wanted to borrow £750 from the CMS. The new wing was started but collapsed in 1893 which meant extra expenditure of £540. It was formally opened at the end of 1893. The drawings show a substantial building with an imposing entrance which was obviously designed to present to the world a visible appearance of the success of the school. The new wing was opened by the Bishop of Sierra Leone who gave an address on women's work and influence using the text 'She hath done what she could'. This was followed by evening of entertainment, probably provided by the Annie Walsh girls. Miss Dunkley, the headmistress, liked the African teachers at the school and asked that a third European, as proposed by the CMS, should not be sent out, although she later changed her mind. An extra teacher was necessary because the teachers were now to have six months leave every eighteen months, instead of every three years. She had tea with the African teachers on Sundays. She refused admission to two children because their mother was living in 'such open and flagrant sin'.<sup>36</sup> Miss Dunkley left in 1894 to marry the Rev. Humphrey, a promising local missionary, but continued her involvement in the school by being a member of the Visiting Committee. After her husband's murder she worked for the CMS in the hinterland of Sierra Leone (see Chapter III).

Miss Bissett succeeded Miss Dunkley and was to remain at the school until 1917 when the ill-health of her parents required her to return to Scotland. Under Miss

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<sup>35</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Rev. Humphrey to CMS Secretary 29 April 1891.

<sup>36</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Dunkley to CMS Secretary 15 January 1891.

Bissett numbers at the school fluctuated . At one time there was a rumour that the school was unhealthy when two pupils died but it was explained that they had been ill before coming to the school. The colonial medical officer defended the School in an article in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. In 1889 the Government Inspector of Schools, the Rev. Sunter, principal of the CMS Fourah Bay College from 1871-1882, reported that the girls' schools run by the Roman Catholic nuns in Sierra Leone, Lagos and the Gambia were the best.<sup>37</sup> The CMS suggested this was because the Catholic missions were able to send out men and women by the half-dozens (they were not paid) whereas the Protestant missionary societies sent ones and twos. The CMS seemed to feel that it was the number of teachers that was important, not the quality. A report on the 1880 census taken in Sierra Leone said that the Catholics were a small but earnest body of workers who educated more children of both sexes than any other religious body. The sisters were all European and unsalaried. It is interesting to note that the census showed 369 Catholics as compared with almost 19,000 Church of England members and 17,000 Methodists. However, overall the Annie Walsh school continued to grow and in 1910 had 122 girls including 39 boarders. The growth was perhaps helped by the considerable length of time which Miss Bissett stayed at the school. The original intention of having as many boarders as possible seems to have been dropped. This could have been because of shortage of accommodation for them or because parents objected.

Although Miss Bissett was never able to achieve the same status as Miss Sass within the CMS, she wrote from time to time about matters not concerning the Annie Walsh School. In 1900 she wrote to complain about the decision by the CMS to refuse to allow the Rev. Castle, one of the missionaries to marry. (See also Chapter V- Nina Castle) She appears to have been highly regarded by the missionaries in Freetown and by the local community. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* of 28th January 1911 had a two column article to mark the 25 years that Miss Bissett had spent at the school. The occasion was marked by the presentation to her of a gold locket and chain. Even with the advances in medicine, this length of service was a remarkable achievement and perhaps was regarded as even more so as it concerned a woman. As

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<sup>37</sup> *CM Intelligencer* March 1889 p. 187.

an indication of the advances in medicine, the CMS medical board decided in 1910 that missionary women in Africa could no longer travel home for their confinements 'thanks to improved conditions of health'.

In 1914 the Rev. Denton, the secretary of the Freetown missionaries, asked the CMS Secretary if Miss Bissett could join the local Executive Committee of the CMS in Freetown.<sup>38</sup> This body controlled the missionaries in Sierra Leone and all correspondence passed through the committee to the CMS headquarters. The Rev. Denton wrote that she would be one of the first women to serve on a CMS Executive Committee anywhere. He later withdrew his request because of possible African feeling. What this meant is unclear. There were African ministers on the Executive Committee but it is difficult to see why their attitudes should be singled out to reject the appointment. It seems just as likely that the other European members objected. It was also felt that her appointment might cause difficulties in other missions. Nevertheless the CMS Parent Committee appeared appreciative of the long service which Miss Bissett had given to the school and, on her resignation, recorded this in the minutes.

During Miss Bissett's tenure the 70th jubilee celebrations were held on the 18th and 19th November 1915. On the first day there was a thanksgiving service and a public meeting and the second day there was a 'garden gathering' and tea for ex-pupils with the Governor of Sierra Leone present. To mark the jubilee it was agreed to create a tennis court. There is little to indicate that the girls took part in any other sport, except for drilling i.e. some sort of physical education, although games were seen at the time as an important way of providing discipline and self-control for both boys and girls. Tributes were paid to the African teachers and, inevitably to Miss Sass. By this time there were 120 day girls and 50 boarders, the maximum number which the school could take. In contrast the grammar school had 61 boys only compared with its normal intake of 150. It had gone through a series of crises, partly because of an inexperienced English headmaster. The grammar school had a long tradition of

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<sup>38</sup>CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Rev. Denton to CMS Secretary 12 October 1914.

African headmasters but the hardening of racial attitudes towards the end of the 19th century had resulted in the disastrous appointment of an English head.

Over the years the teachers devised a number of punishments for infringements of the school regulations.<sup>39</sup> Girls found guilty of excessive talking, inattention, etc., had a red tongue tied round their mouths and had to explain to the principal why they were being punished. Alternatively they had to stand in the assembly hall and be called 'molly long tongue'. Girls found not wearing corsets had to write out lines. When boarders misbehaved, they were not allowed to see their visitors on Sunday. Under Miss Dunkley, girls who misbehaved were sent to the principal's table and made to stand with their hands upstretched supporting a piece of board. Children of the period were punished in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons:- as training, as encouragement, to instil fear or respect or simply to justify the malicious pleasure of an older or bigger person.<sup>40</sup> The CMS was not without those who were guilty of inflicting such punishments. In 1821 a lay English CMS agent in Sierra Leone was dismissed after being convicted of causing the death of a boy because of the punishment he inflicted. The CMS decided that corporal punishment on adults by missionaries was not allowed. It was to be permitted in schools but only on the hand.<sup>41</sup> In 1849 an African CMS schoolmaster was discovered to be flogging pupils regularly, including girls, and after warnings he was suspended.<sup>42</sup> In 1852 the Rev. Beale was accused of cruelty towards his schoolboys by an African male teacher. It was alleged 'He strips them naked, lashes their arms to their sides and flogs them with a leather strap in front of the school'. This issue was never resolved. In 1877 two Creole CMS agents, abetted by their wives, had a girl brutally beaten to death at Onitsha after imposing particularly cruel punishments on her.<sup>43</sup> They received long prison sentences when the crime was revealed some five years after it was committed, although there was some sympathy for the accused since some felt it wrong to try educated people for a crime committed far away and on an uncivilised girl. The

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<sup>39</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989 - School's Register and History, nd., pp.133-5.

<sup>40</sup> James Walvin, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L1 CMS Secretary to Rev. Johnson 26 May 1861.

<sup>42</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Rev. Graf to Rev. Warburton 21 August 1849.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Fyfe, op. cit., p. 434.

matter was raised in the House of Lords by the Duke of Somerset but the CMS received strong support from other members of the House.<sup>44</sup> Corporal punishment of Victorian children was often rooted in the assumption that obedience was the prime virtue to be encouraged among the young.<sup>45</sup> There were exceptions, for example Quaker schools but mostly beatings were fully sanctioned, though increasingly regulated by legislation and by well-known practice.<sup>46</sup> Even in 1888 when the cook's son at the Annie Walsh School was found to have stolen money from one of the teachers and was flogged, the teacher wrote to the CMS Secretary approving of this.<sup>47</sup>

Coercion of children grew increasingly unacceptable during the 19th century. The position became even more difficult where other people's children were involved. Race added another problem, particularly as it was generally assumed that the African children were indulged by their parents. Educators were too busy at home to be concerned about what was going on in West Africa. However cruel the punishments inflicted on the Annie Walsh girls might seem now, they were relatively mild and designed to humiliate and frighten rather than inflict harm on a girl. Although the CMS did not forbid corporal punishment in schools, there was some sort of understanding among its agents regarding what sort of punishment was acceptable and what was not.

The headmistresses of the Annie Walsh School enjoyed mixed success over the first seventy or so years of its existence. The school owed a great deal to Miss Sass who established it on a firm basis from which it could grow. She continued to have an influence long after she retired with successor headmistresses visiting her. The headmistresses' attitudes towards the girls varied, with some much more sympathetic than others. Those who stayed for long periods enjoyed an authority which they might have found difficult to achieve at home unless they were exceptionally talented.

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<sup>44</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, III pp. 386/7.

<sup>45</sup> James Walvin, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Nevill to CMS Secretary 3 November 1888.

Teaching was the most important occupation for single women throughout the 19th century and early 20th century.<sup>48</sup> The Annie Walsh school provided exceptional opportunities for them.

The headmistresses had to work in close contact with their African assistant teachers. Some found this an enjoyable and worthwhile experience but it was not one which the other missionaries felt able to build on. A number of the heads were keen to expand the school's buildings and seemed as concerned as the male missionaries about building works. The headmistresses, for the most part, enjoyed an acknowledged status and position within the Sierra Leone mission and within the local community.

#### IV The Curriculum and External Examinations

The curriculum in 1848 included Bible history, the catechism, grammar arithmetic, geography and dictation plus needlework with the first examination of the girls taking place that year.<sup>49</sup> Two of the local missionary wives carried out the examination, pronounced the needlework excellent and commended the Institution. All the teaching was in English and there seems to have been no thought that any local languages might be used. Examination of the girls in this way was to remain for a number of years.

In the early days of the Institution the girls rose at 6 a. m. to wash and dress and then to prepare the appointed scripture lesson for the day.<sup>50</sup> The main teaching was from 9.30 a. m. to 2.30 p.m. during which they had thirty minutes for lunch. Dinner was at 4.30 and from 7 until 8 in the evening the girls were required to learn their lessons for the next day. Every pupil was required to commit to memory a certain portion of scripture every day. Lessons were given in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, outlines of history and general information 'by means of object lessons' including needlework and grammar. Needlework was seen as an essential part of a girl's education in England.<sup>51</sup> Music, drawing and French were available as an extra.

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<sup>48</sup> Martha Vicinus, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>49</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Rev. Haastrup's Journal for 25 December 1848.

<sup>50</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Regulations of the Female Institution 1847.

<sup>51</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Middle class girls in England at the time were being taught with the aim of fitting them for marriage and homemakers.<sup>52</sup> The ordinary curriculum for them was some French, painting, needlework, singing, dancing, drawing and instrumental music. They might also receive some instruction in general knowledge and the use of globes. The school tried hard to provide a wider education, although it is not clear that the school actually had anyone who was qualified to give some of the lessons, for example French lessons. However such subjects were seen as what some parents expected. In addition the girls were taught to cut out, make and mend their own clothes. If they wished, in their spare time they could take up fancy work. Each girl was required to take her turn in household duties. Despite this amount of practical work there were complaints that the school needed an industrial department where the girls could be trained in domestic tasks. Some saw this as a way of keeping the girls in their place as they were seen locally as ‘stuck up’.<sup>53</sup> Such a development would probably have meant that the girls would have received less academic tuition and the suggestion was never followed through. The issue was partly resolved by appointing a house mother to teach the girls ‘all matters related to domestic work’. In England needlework was ubiquitous in schools and a condition of grants after 1862 and very often replaced arithmetic.<sup>54</sup> The Education Department’s Code of 1879 made domestic economy compulsory for girls in state schools.<sup>55</sup> Some in Freetown believed that the school should be like an English boarding school for girls with high charges.<sup>56</sup> Advertisements for schools in England taking African children appeared in Sierra Leone newspapers. For example in 1889 there was an advertisement for Queen’s College, Twickenham which took ‘... the entire charge of pupils from colonies’ at a cost of 100 guineas a year.<sup>57</sup> From this it would seem that there were people in Sierra Leone who would pay high school fees for their daughters.

The girls received a considerable amount of formal tuition combined with some practical work. The boys’ grammar school in Freetown was more ambitious in its

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<sup>52</sup> H. Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians* (London: Sylvan Press, 1949), p. 311.

<sup>53</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M20 Rev. Nicholson to CMS Secretary 7 April 1875

<sup>54</sup> John Lawson & Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 286.

<sup>55</sup> Carol Dyhouse, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>56</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M17 Rev. J. A. Lamb to Rev. H. Venn 23 November 1870.

<sup>57</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 7 December 1889 p. 1.



teaching. As well as the expected subjects, they were taught Euclid (not taught to the girls until 1912), Greek and vocal music.<sup>58</sup> Largely the boys were taught the subjects which grammar school boys in England learnt.<sup>59</sup> Some of these reflected the fact that some of the boys were eventually expected to become African pastors. Thus the CMS had a clear aim in educating the boys whereas the aim for the girls was to make them good wives and mothers, a much less well-defined objective. There were rivalries between the two schools. The 1874 report for the Annie Walsh School suggested that it was making every effort not to be outstripped by the grammar school. How this was to be measured is unclear.

The syllabus for the school changed little over the years. In 1879 the prospectus stated that the course of study covered English grammar, geography, writing, arithmetic, history, composition, needlework, vocal music, French and drawing. The main change seems to have been that the last items were no longer optional extras. Music, however, was an optional extra at £4 a year compared with the fees of £16 for boarders and £8 for day pupils. It seems likely that it was considered that the parents would opt for the music which would provide an additional source of income. The aim of the school was stated as providing ‘a good and useful education, thoroughly English, but suited as much as possible to the peculiarities and requirements of this country’. Interestingly enough the French lessons were being given by an African teacher, Miss Agnes Quaker, who had spent a number of years in England. There is rarely any information about the level of teaching provided but in 1887 the headmistress commented that the teaching was elementary except in the highest class where even there it was elementary in French and Latin.<sup>60</sup> She considered that many girls of 18/19 years were learning what they should have learnt at the age of seven or eight years.

Only a few of the papers used in the examinations at the Annie Walsh school have survived. The 1883 examinations for the first class had six papers, most of which lasted for three hours which seems very lengthy for some of the short answers which

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<sup>58</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M12 Rev. T. Peyton to Lay Secretary CMS 30 April 1845.

<sup>59</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>60</sup> CMS Archives Extracts from Annual Letters of the Missionaries Miss E.G. Henderson to CMS Secretary Nov. 1887

seem to be required.<sup>61</sup> There was a paper on compound interest with nine questions. The paper on English history covered the accession of Henry VIII to the death of Wolsey and seem to require the pupils to have memorised dates. The geography was based on Africa. There were also papers on Roman history and scripture. Miss Caspari had explained in her report dated 14th March 1878 that all study occupied a secondary place in comparison with Bible study for which there was a daily class.<sup>62</sup> She also mentioned that she held a *conversazione* on Wednesday evenings in order to teach the girls how to converse. Saturday evenings were occupied with making clothes for the various Sierra Leone missions.

In 1889 the interim headmistress decided that Latin was to be dropped (it is not known when it became part of the curriculum but within the previous ten years) and fancy sewing substituted instead. The school was going through a difficult phase with poor examination results and it may be that it was felt that the girls could obtain higher marks in sewing than in Latin. The idea of any rivalry with the boys' grammar school seems to have gone by the board. Miss Pidsley wrote in 1912 that she was now teaching the girls Latin, Euclid's elements, Greek history and hygiene.<sup>63</sup> By 1915 botany was being taught at the school and a microscope was needed. There is little information about what the girls did for games. There are references to drilling in the school yard and also to a tennis court being built in 1915. Games such as hockey, lacrosse, rounders and basketball which were becoming popular in English girls' schools from the 1870s do not seem to have been introduced.<sup>64</sup>

In 1878 Miss Caspari decided to apply to the College of Preceptors for the girls to be admitted to the yearly examinations. This was the first mention of any external examinations for the girls although they were used to taking internal examinations. For comparison, Cheltenham Ladies College started entering girls for public

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<sup>61</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 1883 Examination Papers for Annie Walsh Memorial School for Class I & Class II.

<sup>62</sup> CMS Archives CA1 21 Miss Caspari's Report of 14 March 1878.

<sup>63</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Pidsley to CMS Secretary October 1912 (no day given).

<sup>64</sup> Paul Atkinson, 'Fitness, Feminism and Schooling', in *The Nineteenth Century Woman: her cultural and physical world* ed. by Sara Delamont & Lorna Duffin (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 92-133 (p. 113).

examinations from 1863.<sup>65</sup> By 1891 it seems that the girls had changed to taking the Durham Certificate of Proficiency.<sup>66</sup> This was found to be too difficult and they changed back to taking the College of Preceptors examinations and four passed in 1891 and nine in 1893. In 1894, however, three of the African teachers at the school obtained the Durham Certificate. In 1900 four girls sat the Fourah Bay Junior Certificate which was described as being similar to the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations. All received honours.

The limited involvement of the school with external examinations seems to have been the result of a number of factors. Although a few of the European teachers sent out to the school had received teacher training, principally at the Home and Colonial Training College, many had not. For most of the teachers their training was for more general missionary work. (See Chapter II) It was not until 1918 that the school had its first graduate teacher, a Miss Winter with a BA from Liverpool and previously a junior lecturer in English literature and handwork at Waddington teacher training college.<sup>67</sup> The school placed more emphasis on internal school examinations in which success was necessary for promotion to the next class. The girls did not need examination successes for entry to further education as there was none available in Sierra Leone. They could have gone on to study in England but this would have been at a considerable cost, although there were a few ad hoc arrangements. Early marriage, which was the expectation for many girls, meant there was less need for external examinations. There were also limited openings for girls to work in areas where external certificates might have been useful so there was no perceived need to obtain them. Just to have been at the school was as a good recommendation as any. The main occupations for Sierra Leone women for much of the 19th century, that is for those who needed to work before marriage, were trading and dressmaking and external examinations were irrelevant to these occupations.

## V After Leaving School

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<sup>65</sup> June Purvis, *A History of Women's Education in England* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p. 84.

<sup>66</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Bissett to CMS Secretary 22 December 1891.

<sup>67</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/L14 CMS Secretary to Miss Bissett 15 April 1917.

For many of the girls their stay at the school was for two or three years only but could be as short as one year or as long as eight. The main expectation for the girls was that they would become wives of Christians, preferably African CMS ministers, and good mothers bringing up their children with a love of God. Not all the girls fulfilled this expectation. Expulsions were not unusual although the reasons are rarely stated explicitly. When Caroline Metzger was expelled in 1856, the reason was 'given as continuous bad behaviour'. Whether this meant she was just not sufficiently submissive to the school's regime, a not infrequent complaint about the pupils, or whether her offence was more serious is not known.<sup>68</sup> In 1859 the Rev. Wilson's daughter was expelled for (unspecified) bad conduct. When a European teacher was dismissed in 1852 for consorting with a European in Freetown, two of the pupils were also dismissed, being described as her accomplices.<sup>69</sup> Another former pupil was reported in 1861 as now working in her mother's spirit shop. As late as 1910 the headmistress was commenting that there were few opportunities for educated girls in Sierra Leone.<sup>70</sup> She wrote that most girls took up dressmaking or trading, the latter an occupation which the CMS missionaries deplored since it took a woman away from her home and distracted her from household duties. In addition some girls could go to the two hospitals in Freetown which employed twelve African females at the time. Some ex-pupils started their own schools. For example two were started in 1910 but these seem to have made little impact. One girl was briefly a missionary in the hinterland of Sierra Leone.

The girls often married shortly after leaving the school and it was considered that being a pupil of Annie Walsh enhanced the chances of marriage. For example in 1869 a 'Mr. Goodman, a schoolmaster of the American Mission, came to choose a wife. He selected Fanny Roberts, a monitress, whom he married before the end of the year.'<sup>71</sup> This was apparently just one of the many instances in which Annie Walsh girls were chosen as wives. The CMS Secretary wrote in 1873 that he had heard 'that Bishop Crowther has but lately carried off some 5 or 6 of the most promising girls to

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<sup>68</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M15 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 4 July 1856.

<sup>69</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Rev. Rhodes to CMS Secretary 17 February 1852.

<sup>70</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Bissett to CMS Secretary 19 March 1910.

<sup>71</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989: School's Register and History p. 19.

be wives of men whom he is taking to be teachers or evangelists in the Niger Mission'.<sup>72</sup> The headmistress wrote in 1883 that every girl who left the school was married - surely an overstatement but she obviously wanted to make the point of how well her girls were thought of in Freetown. Stock in his history of the CMS thought it worthwhile mentioning an anecdote about two women from Southern Nigeria visiting Freetown in the early 1900s.<sup>73</sup> They wanted to visit the school because they had heard of it from the wife of a government clerk living near them. They had asked her how her home was as good as it was and she had replied because of the Annie Walsh school where she had been a pupil. This supports the view that Annie Walsh girls made good homemakers and wives. A number of girls fulfilled the expectation that they would marry CMS African ministers. Miss Sass's report for 1859 records that one of her pupils had married a CMS catechist. In 1851 Susan Crowther, a daughter of Samuel Crowther, who had been a pupil at the school and then an assistant, married the Rev. Nichol.<sup>74</sup> He was the second African minister to be ordained by the CMS. Another daughter, also at the school, married the Rev. T. B. Macauley, first principal of Lagos Grammar School. In 1888 the acting head of the school reported that two of the former pupils had married missionaries whilst another had married a Wesleyan schoolmaster.

There was no teacher training for girls in Sierra Leone and the school used the monitress system to groom future teachers for the school. As the number of girls at the school grew so there were increasing opportunities for African girls to work there since the number of European teachers was restricted to three at the most. Agnes Quaker, the daughter of the headmaster of the boys' grammar school (who himself had married an Annie Walsh girl) and a former pupil, became a teacher at the school in 1877. She had also spent eight years in England, although it is not clear whether this was as a pupil or teacher.<sup>75</sup> Miss Sass had taken her and another girl to England when she left in 1869.<sup>76</sup> At the time the headmistress described herself as being on

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<sup>72</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L9 Instructions from CMS Secretary to Miss Shoard 28 April 1874.

<sup>73</sup> Eugene Stock, *op. cit.*, IV p. 62.

<sup>74</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Mrs. Rhodes to CMS Secretary 19 May 1851.

<sup>75</sup> CMS Archives CA1 01 Miss Caspari's Report of 14 March 1878.

<sup>76</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989: School's Register and History p. 13.

her own - what she meant was that there were no other European teachers because of sickness. Miss Quaker was described as an efficient teacher in music and French. In 1882 she married Moses Boyle, consul for the Republic of Liberia in St. George's Cathedral, Freetown.<sup>77</sup> This was a fashionable wedding with the Governor of Sierra Leone present. Dinner was provided for all the Annie Walsh girls. The publicity would have helped to raise the profile of the school. Nevertheless the Bishop of Sierra Leone was very critical of the husband for reasons not stated. Possibly there was resentment that such a bright star in the CMS firmament had not married an African minister. To mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, Mrs. Boyle, as she now was, was chosen to represent the spirit of Sierra Leone.<sup>78</sup> There seems to have been some thought that she might have run the school but this never happened. Another African teacher was at the school for 22 years both as pupil and teacher and when she resigned to be married the Visiting Committee expressed their very deep appreciation of her services.<sup>79</sup>

The Annie Walsh girl who is best documented is Sarah Forbes Bonetta who came to the school in 1851.<sup>80</sup> (See also Chapter I - Section VIII) Sarah was given as a young girl by the King of Dahomey to Queen Victoria who took an interest in her education and subsequent life. It was subsequently arranged that she should attend the Annie Walsh school. Miss Sass was pleased with Sarah and wrote that 'Her Majesty has been pleased to express her approbation as to the progress she has made and has lately sent her some nice books and games'.<sup>81</sup> After her time at the school she was brought back to England to be looked after by the Rev. and Mrs. Schon who had been in Sierra Leone. She visited the Buxton family.<sup>82</sup> In 1862 she married Captain Davies of Lagos, a wealthy merchant and had three children, the eldest of which was a goddaughter of the Queen. Sarah was a very bright and personable child who surmounted the dreadful circumstances of her early life. She benefited not only from

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<sup>77</sup> *Freetown Express and Christian Observer* 1 December 1882 p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Christopher Fyfe, op. cit., p. 466.

<sup>79</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Annie Walsh Visiting Committee Minutes 24 June 1897.

<sup>80</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989: School's Register and History p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> CMS Archives CA1 0187 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 3 August 1852.

<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Ellen Buxton, *Buxton Sketchbook* (London: Bles, 1969), pp. 79-80.

being a protegee of the Queen but also from the education which she received at the Annie Walsh school.

There was considerable variety in what the girls did after leaving the school. Despite being a fee-paying school, the pupils came from a variety of backgrounds. The availability of free places or scholarships ensured this, although as numbers grew the number of pupils with free places declined as a proportion of the total number of pupils. Free places were available to a limited number of the daughters of African ministers, e.g. Samuel Crowther's daughters and some African teachers. These girls were encouraged to become teachers. There were scholarships available, for example the Braithwaite Fund which in 1885 was paying £40 a year to support four pupils at the school.<sup>83</sup> Apparently such pupils were either married or worked as dressmakers on leaving. The intention was that they should work at the school for three years but none were suitable to take on as pupil teachers. Those middle class girls for whom fees were paid were not interested in teaching. Pupils such as the daughter of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone or the niece of the President of Liberia were unlikely to want to work before marrying. A number of girls fulfilled the expectation that they would marry African ministers. Some girls such as Agnes Quaker and Sarah Forbes Bonetta made very advantageous marriages. Little is known about most of the considerable number of girls that passed through the school during the 19th century but it seems likely that for most their future prospects whether in terms of marriage or working were enhanced.

#### VI The Annie Walsh Visiting Committee

The initial scheme for managing the Female Institution, drawn up by the Rev. Graf, a local missionary, envisaged three male visitors being appointed as a committee to oversee the headmistress and her activities.<sup>84</sup> He suggested that Miss Sass was inexperienced and needed help which only the local male missionaries could give. He added that European ladies were held in contempt in Sierra Leone and presumably would not help the Institution's reputation. They were, moreover, weak and

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<sup>83</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 A. H. Ansell to CMS Secretary 14 May 1885.

<sup>84</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Rev. Graf to CMS Secretary 2 May 1851.



concerned with their domestic duties. Some of them would have to travel to Freetown from the outlying missionary stations and it was suggested that this would tax their strength too much. The arguments against women on the committee were not particularly cogent. They reflect more a desire for the male missionaries to take charge of an interesting new development in the missionary work in Sierra Leone and also a reflection that in England men were very much involved with girls' education. For example the Girls Public Day School Trust (founded 1872) was administered to a considerable extent by middle class men.<sup>85</sup> Emily Davies argued in 1867 that there should be some ladies on governing bodies of girls' schools, suggesting that men dominated such work.<sup>86</sup> The development of secondary education for girls was seen as something which the male missionaries felt they wanted to control, an indication of the importance they gave it. The CMS Secretary was clear that any supervising committee should consist of ladies, appointed by the Parent Committee in London. This would have been a somewhat laborious process given the length of time it took to get messages to and from Sierra Leone and given the high mortality rates of Europeans at the time in Sierra Leone.

The CMS Secretary felt that it was especially important that ladies should be involved when the expulsion of a girl was being discussed, as happened from time to time. The CMS Secretary appeared to have seen the Female Institution as falling almost entirely within the purview of the ladies at the mission stations in Sierra Leone. He asked Miss Sass to write to him on matters concerning the Institution. The usual practice was for all letters being sent to London by missionaries to go through the local missionary secretary, always a man. But the Secretary's request gave Miss Sass a direct link to the most important officer of the CMS. He wrote to her saying that 'Christian mothers must be the source of all internal spiritual growth in Africa or elsewhere'.<sup>87</sup> A Ladies' Visiting Committee was formed, replacing the male missionaries. There had been differences of opinion on running the Institution between the Rev. Graf and Miss Sass so this may have influenced the CMS Secretary in his decision. He would also have been influenced by the idea of separate spheres

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<sup>85</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 56/57.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

<sup>87</sup> CMS Archives CA1 L4 Henry Venn to Miss Sass 7 February 1851.

for men and women. Whatever the reasons this was the first time that missionary wives assumed any type of managerial role in Sierra Leone. However the Secretary of the Visiting Committee who had an important role in the Committee's work was the Rev. Rhodes. Whether this was a compromise in return for a committee composed entirely of ladies or whether they did not feel or were made to feel they were not equal to the post is not known. For much of the 19th century it was common practice for men to be the public face of organisations, even those run by women. The duties of the local secretary were to keep the minutes and to correspond with the CMS headquarters so the role of the secretary was influential. With a head like Miss Sass there was probably not too much day to day administration. Even the appointment of an all female committee did not satisfy everyone. The Rev. Nicol, head of the Native Pastorate Church, complained that his wife had not been invited to sit on the committee. She appeared to be eminently suitable to sit on the committee as she had been at the Institution, educated also in England, was Samuel Crowther's daughter and had been one of the first African assistant teachers at the Institution. He argued very cogently that a converted African had a 'treble interest' in the Institution. He clearly saw the refusal as a slight towards his wife and to all African Christians and refused to take his wife to dinners with Europeans. The missionaries were split in their support for the Rev. Nicol but the CMS Secretary did not appoint her to the committee. The first African woman to join the Committee was Mrs. Maxwell in 1860. She was the wife of the third African to be ordained.

The first meeting of the Ladies' Visiting Committee was held in May 1851. (The grammar school had a similar committee). They were, of course, ladies not women. It was agreed to meet quarterly, although in practice meetings were somewhat more irregular. Miss Sass was asked to keep a written record of each girl's conduct, presumably to be inspected by the committee. Miss Sass had the power to dismiss any of the paying pupils but the Ladies' Committee had to be consulted when any pupils paid for by the CMS were concerned. Although the meetings of the committee were for the most part short and dealt with routine business, from time to time the girls were called in and examined. In April 1852 the girls were examined in geography, scripture, grammar and mental arithmetic. Such examinations took place

on an irregular basis, presumably depending on the enthusiasm of the members of the committee. In 1855 the ladies visited the children and exhorted them to be good Christians. At this time the committee was expanded to include the wife of the CMS Bishop of Sierra Leone. The Ladies' Committee complained from time to time that it had no real power and could only endorse the decisions of the headmistress. In 1871 the then Bishop of Sierra Leone wrote to the CMS Secretary saying that the current committee was useless.<sup>88</sup> In 1876 the committee was refusing to meet because no notice was being taken of their suggestions on the running of the school.<sup>89</sup> However all was not lost and in 1875 they decided to appoint a house mother to teach the girls 'all matters related to domestic work'.

With the decline in the number of European missionaries in Sierra Leone as part of the Africanisation of the church, the Ladies' Committee found it increasingly difficult to recruit members. It would have been possible to appoint the wives of African ministers but that would have meant that they would dominate the committee. In 1881 the committee had two members only and then it fell into abeyance. When it met again the Bishop of Sierra Leone (always closely concerned with the affairs of the school) was in the chair and the only lady present was the headmistress. They asked for further members to be appointed including two African women and the wife of a customs official but the idea of an all female committee seems to have been lost and by the end of the 19th century the affairs of the Annie Walsh school were supervised by a committee dominated by men. Men had expectations about the affairs of such institutions as the Annie Walsh school and involving eminent local people like the Bishop may have been seen as providing a more effective committee.

The Ladies' Committee took a firm stand on the admission of illegitimate children. Miss Sass had decided soon after her arrival in 1849 that no illegitimate children should be admitted to the school because they would corrupt the other girls.<sup>90</sup> It has been suggested that this decision was not taken on moral grounds but as a means of

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<sup>88</sup> CMS Archives CA 1 M18 Bishop of Sierra Leone to CMS Secretary 8 April 1871.

<sup>89</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M20 Mrs. Caiger to Rev. H. Wright 24 April 1876.

<sup>90</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M14 Miss Sass to CMS Secretary 5 July 1849.

reducing the number of girls applying for admission.<sup>91</sup> It was thought that the Europeans who had fathered illegitimate children could afford to provide their own school. In 1873 the Committee decided that the exclusion of illegitimate children had not improved morality in Sierra Leone so they should now be admitted. The CMS grammar school had always admitted illegitimate children. There was no formal rescinding of the regulation on illegitimate children but the Ladies' Committee considered that the CMS would not object. Although this may have been the result of a broader outlook on the part of the Committee, the fact that the Catholics were now providing a school for girls which did not exclude illegitimate children may have played a part. With so much literature and publicity resulting from the purity campaign in Britain, it is not difficult to feel that the headmistresses would have been influenced by the campaign. In writing about American missionaries, Jane Hunter has suggested that they were especially worried about sexual challenges to the purity of adolescent girls.<sup>92</sup> In the last quarter of the 19th century the movement for the advancement of 'social purity' was gathering momentum which Sheila Jeffreys has described as 'an evangelical, anti-sex, repressive movement'.<sup>93</sup> Organisations were set up such as the Moral Reform Union, the Church of England Purity Society and the Gospel Purity Association.<sup>94</sup> The Legitimation League was set up in 1893 ostensibly to campaign for the interests of children born out of wedlock. M. Mason has suggested that there were close links between the social purity movement and agitation for women's rights in the last twenty years of the 19th century.<sup>95</sup> However it is clear that in missionary circles the two were not seen as linked. Prochaska has suggested that missionary women were more likely to admire Hannah More than Mary Wollstonecraft and that political emancipation was seen as a means of doing good.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Christopher Fyfe, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>92</sup> Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 175.

<sup>93</sup> Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London: Pandora, 1985), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 216.

<sup>96</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 227.

The essence of femininity was defined as purity and little girls were intended to appear as innocent and unsullied in every way.<sup>97</sup> The rule on the exclusion of illegitimate girls was re-imposed in 1891, however, and confirmed by the committee.<sup>98</sup> The question of illegitimacy arose from time to time. In 1912 it was confirmed that there was no CMS regulation requiring the exclusion of illegitimate children from schools.<sup>99</sup> For example the rule at the CMS Lagos Girls' Seminary was that illegitimate girls were not admitted as boarders but as day pupils only, although even then exceptions were made. In 1913 the Rev. Denton wrote to the CMS Secretary asking for the rules on illegitimacy to be relaxed for the paying pupils if not for anyone educated at the CMS expense.<sup>100</sup> He felt that the rule penalised the innocent and had not prevented immorality. He noted that one of Sierra Leone's African archdeacons was illegitimate. He also noted that in the Yoruba mission the rules on admitting illegitimate girls had been slackened, depending on the attitude of the girl. It was then decided that illegitimate children were no longer to be excluded from the Annie Walsh School.<sup>101</sup>

The Ladies' Committee found it difficult to deal with some of the headmistresses. Forceful, long-serving headmistresses felt well able to run the school without assistance from the committee. The rapid turnover of missionary wives made it difficult for the committee to have a sense of continuity. It would have been possible to appoint more wives of African ministers to the committee but this would have resulted in a committee dominated by African women. In practice the committee found it difficult to exercise any real control over the school. One problem was that it never included a member who was able to deal as an equal with the headmistress with the result that their advice to the teachers was not felt to be very important. Although the idea of a Ladies' Committee to look after a girls' school might have had its attractions, one result was that the committee was divorced from the mainstream of missionary activity in Sierra Leone and found it difficult to get its opinions taken

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<sup>97</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>98</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Miss Dunkley to CMS Secretary 13 April 1891.

<sup>99</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/L14 CMS Secretary to Rev. Denton 21 December 1912.

<sup>100</sup> CMS Archives G3 A1/0 Rev. Denton to CMS Secretary 14 May 1913.

<sup>101</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989: School's Register and History *nd.*, p. 70.

seriously. Some of the missionary wives had had little opportunity to practise their skills in running church affairs before leaving England. They may have been made to feel that their primary duty was to their husband and the work of the mission station and that this had to take precedence over the work of the committee. Some may have felt that they were just too busy to devote sufficient time to the affairs of the school. Despite the importance that the CMS maintained it gave to the education of girls, there was little doubt that the education of boys came first if there was any conflict and this may have given the impression that the Committee's work was second best, a consolation prize to women's ambitions to be more involved in missionary activity.

## VII Conclusions

The idea of formal secondary education for girls in England was only just beginning when the CMS set up what was to become the Annie Walsh school in 1845. Schools such as Cheltenham Ladies College would have been used by the wealthy only, although later on the schools of the Girls Public Day School Trust would have provided schooling for middle class girls. Whilst the Annie Walsh school was elitist in the sense that it charged fees which only the middle class in Sierra Leone could afford, there were attempts to widen the pupil catchment area by providing scholarships and free places, particularly for daughters of the African CMS staff and African teachers. Whilst the aim of the school to provide Christian wives and mothers may seem narrow, to some extent the girls could use the education as they thought fit and it would have helped them if they worked as traders, for example. The photograph (Appendix VI, Figure 7) was taken in 1915 when the school was celebrating its first seventy years. Although officially there was no school uniform for the girls at the time, the girls seem to have been asked to wear similar outfits. Presumably the women in black are the African assistant teachers whilst the European staff are absent. This photograph was taken from a history of the school produced in 1989 and it may have been consciously chosen to emphasise how Africanised the school was becoming.

Some of the headmistresses who were sent out from England were forceful and energetic, a useful combination when perhaps the support among the local missionary

staff for the education of girls was not particularly strong. There was the odd disaster but most who came out enjoyed running the school. This provided an autonomy and status for them which they might otherwise have found difficult to obtain. Most of them got on well with the girls and the African teachers, some enjoying very cordial relationships with the staff and girls. This feeling seems to have been reciprocated on a number of occasions. The headmistresses could not run the school without the help of the African assistant teachers but on the other hand there was never any suggestion that there should be an African headmistress. It was felt better to close the school when there were no European teachers. This was in contrast to the boys' grammar school where for much of the 19th century the headmaster was an African.

Whilst there was always a considerable element of religious teaching, the school's curriculum went far beyond this and also provided more than basic reading, writing and arithmetic. It also provided more than the conventional tuition in French, music and drawing which all middle-class girls of the period were expected to excel at. Nevertheless the musical skills of the girls provided good publicity for the school with the concerts reported in the local newspapers. The school was slow to adapt to taking outside examinations. There was little incentive for this but perhaps the idea of an over educated wife was also a factor. But in the 20th century the school was contributing to a black professional middle class when the Annie Walsh girls became, for example, doctors and lawyers, a development from the education provided earlier on at the school.

The girls' fortunes - careers is too strong a term to use in the 19th century - were mostly enhanced by having been at the school. Although marriage to a Christian was the lot for most of them, their education meant their prospects for a future husband were improved. Sarah Forbes Bonetta in whom Queen Victoria took an interest was an outstanding example of what the pupils achieved but she was not alone. The Annie Walsh school prompted other missionary societies to provide secondary education for girls, for example, the Methodists and the Catholics. A similar CMS school was established in Lagos so the Annie Walsh school can be seen as a catalyst for girls' secondary education in British West Africa.



The role of the all female visiting committee does not seem to have fulfilled the promise which was expected. The rapid turnover of missionary wives, their inexperience and the forceful personalities of some of the headmistresses meant that the committee had difficulty in playing an effective part in running the school. Its demise was an acknowledgement of this. Nevertheless seen in the context of the empowerment of women in the 19th century in British West Africa, the school provided a statement of what could be done by women for women in the important area of education.

## CHAPTER V

### Accepted in the Beloved: The Myth of the Missionary Heroine

#### I Introduction

Myths play an important role in society. It has been argued that it is the historian's job not to ridicule the myths which have developed over time but to show the difference between myth and reality.<sup>1</sup> For those who accepted the myths, these became the reality in the sense that the myths determined views and behaviour. Myth and reality thus become mixed. It is necessary to see why the myths have developed and it is easier to do this looking backwards over a period of time. Myths also become a means of justifying behaviour. They have their origins in specific events which are used in a specific way. Myths can also be used as a means of legitimisation which work to justify events, particularly at popular level.<sup>2</sup> It has also been suggested that myths simplify and reduce the problematical to an obvious truth. Thus the myth becomes a narrative which 'improves' the facts and creates a new acceptable 'reality'.<sup>3</sup> The Comaroffs have implied that there is a mythical element in much of the tales of missionary work. They point out that missionary narratives often open with the passage from civilization to the 'regions beyond' and the crossing of the great water.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore they suggest that 'On the great maritime highways of British imperialism, mission vessels plied a mythical course'.

In the nineteenth century much was written by and about missionaries. This chapter looks at the way in which the image of the missionary heroine was developed during the 19th century. The analysis is done in two contrasting ways. First to be considered is what can conveniently be called the missionary press, that is the many magazines produced by the various missionary societies and also the many books which were published on missionary subjects. Fiction, on the other hand, can be regarded as the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Norman Davies in the *Independent Magazine*, 4 May 2002, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Robert H. MacDonald *The Language of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* and quoted in MacDonald's *Language of Empire* p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution* 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), I p. 172.

vehicle through which to disseminate and reinforce moral and ethical standards.<sup>5</sup> By way of contrast therefore selected 19th century novels are also looked at, a number of which are critical of the female missionary but in turn the novels contributed to the myth of the female missionary.

The missionary press was an important force which the various missionary societies used to influence and mould public opinion; not least in importance were the many missionary magazines which the missionary societies published (see Appendix III). The Church Missionary Society (CMS) *Gleaner* had a circulation of around 82,000 at its peak in the 1890s whilst the *Women's Missionary Magazine* (United Free Church of Scotland) had an average circulation of 28,000 during 1901. Such magazines would have achieved an authority and authenticity with their readers which would have been difficult to challenge. Children's imaginations were stirred by being told stories of female missionaries by their mothers and this encouraged an early enthusiasm for the work of the societies.<sup>6</sup> To some extent therefore the societies controlled the diffusion of information about their activities. It was difficult to obtain independent information about the work of the missionary societies. The societies felt they knew what their supporters and readers wanted to read about and went about providing it, showing what their missionary workers did in the best light.

Being a 19th century missionary in somewhere like Africa or India was not a career or vocation that was likely to lead to a long life; if disease did not strike, then the hostile inhabitants might. These dangers were no less for the trader or the colonial administrator but the religious aspect of being a missionary and its seemingly altruistic nature gave a special poignancy to the sacrifice (and the emphasis was on giving one's life for others) in the work of religious conversion. Patriotism too was linked to ideas of Christian sacrifice and service, a theme which was developed in the lives of missionaries, particularly female missionaries.<sup>7</sup> Since martyrs inevitably

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth Y. Jenkins, *Reclaiming Myths of Power* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1995), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, 'Little Vessels: Children in the Nineteenth-Century English Missionary Movement', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 6 (1978), 103-118 (p. 104).

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 83.

create an interest in the cause for which their lives have been given, the deaths of missionaries not only set an example for others to join a mission but could also be used to call on the sympathy of those at home. The latter could feel that they were contributing to a great work without having to set foot outside of the British Isles. In his *Notes on Missionary Subjects* Robert Cust, for a long time a leading member of the CMS, suggested that it was hard that a man (and presumably a woman) had to die to be redeemed but this had been so at all times - 'Death throws a halo around the departed one'.<sup>8</sup> Many missionaries shared the feelings of Francis Coillard, a missionary in South Africa, who wrote in December 1898 'I am departing for the third time to Africa - poor Africa. Ah if one could only give oneself to her until the last hour of one's life'.<sup>9</sup> Thus the many premature deaths of missionaries which occurred throughout the 19th century could be seen as serving a purpose in promoting the missionary cause. The deaths of female missionaries were seen as particularly affecting. In some cases, in death they assumed more importance to the missionary cause than when alive. Thus, even in death they performed an important role, joining the pantheon of missionary worthies. The Victorian public was attracted to womanly self-sacrifice; for example Grace Darling was regarded as a heroine for her rescue, along with her father, of five people wrecked on the Farne Islands. She, herself, died at the early age of 27, surely a factor contributing to her heroic status. Heroines needed also to emphasise the caring aspects of their heroism. Florence Nightingale received far more public adulation for her role as the lady with the lamp rather than as a hospital and sanitation expert. The caring aspect, especially for the saving of souls, was stressed as an essential part of the female missionary's task. The lot of a young Victorian woman was seen as passive resignation and she could be noble in good works only, an aspect emphasised by the missionary press.<sup>10</sup> Favoured contemporary models of heroines included Mrs. Gladstone for her homely services to her husband.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Needham Cust, *Notes on Missionary Subjects* (London: Elliot Stock, 1888), p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Carl Wilhelm Kumm, *African Missionary Heroes and Heroines* (New York: MacMillan, 1917), p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Rowbotham, "'Soldiers of Christ?': images of female missionaries in late nineteenth-century Britain: Issues of heroism and martyrdom' *Gender and History*, 12 (2000), 82-106 (p. 89)

An enormous number of novels were published in the 19th century. Between 1816 and 1851, it is estimated that 45,000 books were published in England alone, of which 10,000 were religious works.<sup>12</sup> They can be seen as tracts for their times in reflecting the concerns of the period. In recounting topical events, novels provide a point of reference from which developments can be traced over time. They can also be seen as both reflecting and constructing society. Their reception can also be seen as illustrating ideologies and beliefs of society although there is always the danger of selecting parts of a novel which seem relevant to the topic under discussion and ignoring anything else. There can be a danger of over-interpreting novels for which one of the main purposes is after all to entertain - 'to amuse us, to give us agreeable relaxation'.<sup>13</sup> Mockery or satire may be one way of coming to terms with a problem which people use even when attached to a particular idea. This is especially relevant in looking at the depiction of Mrs. Jellyby in Dickens' *Bleak House*. Such references also help to keep the subject alive in readers' minds, a great number of whom were women. A critical or satirical reference to missions was better than no mention at all. How far novels can be seen as 'a mirror of widely held beliefs' must be open to question but there are fewer references to female missionaries and their work in some of the more popular 19th century novels than might have been expected from the general interest in the 19th century in missions and their work. Although the novels discussed in this chapter cover the period 1827-1901, only one author, Charlotte M. Yonge, was still interested enough to continue to write about missionaries at the end of the 19th century and she was seen increasingly as catering to an elderly audience. There are few books in which missions are central to the theme of the novel and fewer in which female missionaries play a key role. The last two decades of the 19th century saw a rapid expansion in missionary work, which was particularly marked by the increase in the number of single female missionaries (see Chapter I). Little of this was reflected in the fiction of the time. It may be that authors felt that their public had more than enough to read on the subject in the publications of the missionary press or that the topic assumed a seriousness that fiction could not use and where satire would have been seen as inappropriate.

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<sup>12</sup> Ruth Y. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> E. Dowden, *Fraser's Magazine* 72 1865 747, quoted in Kate Flint, *The Women Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 49.

## II The Missionary Heroine

The CMS was aware of the problem that the missionary societies might be reproached for sending out people to the mission field to die. Stock in his four volume history of the CMS defended the decisions of the various societies to send out young women by quoting from Robert Cust's address on missionary heroes in Africa.<sup>14</sup> In this Cust spoke of 'many a gentle woman's grave, for women have never been found wanting to share the honour and the danger of the Cross'. Stock says '... he (Cust) uses these noble words:-'

'Some are selected to live and work; to others is conceded the peculiar grace to die nobly, and set a glorious example. Deaths are required as well as Lives to complete the picture of the New Life. Some may follow the steps of our Lord in a life of beneficence and mercy: to others is granted the sweeter lot of filling up that which is behind his Sufferings. And in last struggle, how by grace they have been sustained, doing nothing common or mean in the last memorable scene of their earthly passion but sealing their faith by their manner of meeting death.'

Accepting Cust's argument meant that a death could be seen as contributing just as much to missionary activity as a life spent spreading the gospel in foreign parts. There is no firm evidence that missionary women in West Africa suffered from a greater mortality rate than their male counterparts. The death of a woman, however, especially where she was young, seemed to acquire a special significance. The missionaries revised the definition of a heroine from meaning a woman of exalted spirit or achievements to that of one who gave her life for the cause, whatever her so-called achievements. In the 19th century it was not unexpected that men would die for the cause of Queen and empire, and also God, but the prospect of sheltered middle-class women similarly sacrificing their lives was a phenomenon with which the Victorians had to come to terms. They did this in a number of ways.

Books with titles such as *Memoirs of British Female Missionaries* by J. Thompson (published in 1841) and *Women in the Mission Field* by the Rev. A. R. Buckland (published in 1895) appeared at regular intervals in the 19th century. The full title of

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<sup>14</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), I p. 181.

Edwin Dawson's book of 1909 was *Heroines of missionary adventure: true stories of the intrepid bravery and patient endurance of missionaries in their encounters with uncivilized man, wild beasts and the forces of nature in all parts of the world*. This 'heroic' tradition carried over to the middle of the 20th century with the publication of *Women of Our Time* by P. M. Webb published in 1958 which opens with the story of 'one of the many brave women who left the sheltered security of Victorian drawing rooms to accompany their missionary husbands'. Some writers tried to show that any woman who went out to countries where 'Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people', that is Africa, were entitled to be considered a heroine'.<sup>15</sup> This was spreading the idea of missionary heroines very thinly and such attempts would have downgraded the value of a heroine who would at least have had to put her life at risk, if not to die, in order to justify being considered a heroine. Portrayals of women missionaries attempted to reassure readers that the 'delicate balance of appropriate gendered behaviour' was maintained.<sup>16</sup>

Although missionary wives are often shown as passive with little choice in dutifully accompanying their husbands and so ready to sacrifice their lives, thereby becoming heroines, this was not universally the case. Prior to the expansion of the numbers of single female missionaries in the last two decades of the 19th century, a woman who wished to further the missionary cause overseas had a very limited choice. She could remain at home and help raise support and funds for the work overseas or she could marry a missionary. Mostly missionaries were encouraged to be married but the preference was to serve an initial term overseas before taking a wife, particularly where a new mission station was being established. On their return home on leave, the missionaries would undertake a number of engagements to publicise their work and this gave them opportunities to find a wife. Conversely there were opportunities for women who wished to serve the missionary cause to become acquainted with such men as future husbands. Anna Hinderer (discussed more fully in Chapter III) met

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<sup>15</sup> William Pringle Livingstone, *Christina Forsyth of Fingoland* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), p. 83.

<sup>16</sup> Sean Gill, 'Heroines of Missionary Adventure: The Portrayal of Victorian Women in Popular Fiction and Biography', in *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture* ed. by Ann Hogan & Andrew Bradstock, (London: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 172-183 (p. 176).



David Hinderer of the CMS who was home on leave and speaking at Lowestoft, married him and went out to Ibadan. She mentions in her memoirs that she had always wanted to serve in Africa and this was one way of achieving her ambition but it would be wrong to think of her as passively following her husband in his work. Edwin Dawson when writing about Anna Hinderer as a 'heroine of missionary adventure' described West Africa as 'the very seat of the devil' so emphasising the sacrifice which she had had to make. Her book was intended to inspire others and the copy in my possession was given as a Sunday School prize in 1878. Although it seemed that to die in the course of missionary duty was sufficient to make a woman a heroine, Anna Hinderer survived seventeen years in Ibadan before returning to England. She did, however, die shortly afterwards as the result, it was suggested, of an injury received in Ibadan so she could be seen as a heroine. The Rev. Buckland in writing about Anna Hinderer chose to emphasise her sufferings rather than the work which she undertook.<sup>17</sup> A review of her memoirs in the *African Times* stated 'Heroism as grand yet not so conspicuous as any displayed by soldier or sailor is shown by the English ladies who go forth to pestilential climates, there to labour in converting savages'.<sup>18</sup> Stock refers to Anna Hinderer as 'one of the best known and most honoured among those of missionary heroines'.<sup>19</sup>

A number of women (and men) who were widowed in West Africa chose to remain and married again. One, Mrs. Weeks (Davey-Graham) married three CMS men in Sierra Leone.<sup>20</sup> She may have felt a special affinity for the country as she had had Samuel Crowther as a parlour boarder and had given him his name, that of her own pastor in England.<sup>21</sup> The Basel Missionary Society adopted a different means of providing wives for its missionaries. Once the missionary was settled he could write home and request the Home Committee to select a wife for him (see Chapter III). Whilst the woman chosen would undoubtedly have been subject to pressure to agree, she would have had some element of choice in the matter and could not have been

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<sup>17</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, *Women in the Mission Field* (London: Ibsister & Co., 1895), p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> *African Times* 30 January 1873 pp. 85-86.

<sup>19</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., II p.115.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 456.

forced to go against her will. The mere fact of being a missionary wife meant she was portrayed as being of heroic status. A woman could refuse to marry a missionary if she did not want to join in his work or she could seek out means of finding such a husband where she felt the calling to missionary work; thus there was an element of choice.

The concept of the missionary heroine helped to make it acceptable for women to step outside of their domestic sphere. Throughout the 19th century there was a belief in the physical delicacy of woman.<sup>22</sup> If missionary women were seen to be so special as to achieve the status of heroines then they could be seen as the exception to this rule and not as challenging the belief in the frailty of women. Thus the image of the fragile 'Angel of the House' could be preserved. This was especially so for those who were wives and who were assumed to have sought the protection of a husband from the worries of the world. The massacre of five American female missionaries during the Hut Tax war in Sierra Leone (see Chapter III) and also the massacre at Ku-Cheng in China in 1895 of six English female missionaries served to emphasise the dangers to which such women were exposed. The Rev. Buckland wrote that 'deaths at Ku-Cheng will but kindle the enthusiasm of recruits in numbers more than adequate to replace the slain'.<sup>23</sup>

Memorials to the deceased were a feature of the 19th century. Emily Gosse, an energetic evangelical, died of breast cancer in 1857 after suffering some horrendous treatment. Her husband wrote a memorial to her, commenting that 'Truly every remembrance of this beloved one is fragrant with the name of Jesus'.<sup>24</sup> It was in the context of such memorials as these that missionary memorials were written.

Celebrations of the lives of deceased missionaries could take various forms ranging from a normal size book to a lavishly decorated memorial to a home produced statement. By the end of the 19th century women serving as missionaries were far

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<sup>22</sup> Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 94.

<sup>23</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Phillip H. Gosse, *A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse* (London: James, 1857), p. 80.

more common than ever before and there was less attempt to portray them as heroines. Despite the considerable number of books written about Mary Slessor who served in the Old Calabar district and who died there in 1915, there was less attempt to have the halo of heroism attached to her although it has been claimed that she inspired many women to follow her (see Chapter III).

Nina Castle, a missionary wife in Sierra Leone, died in 1903 and shortly afterwards a 129 page book was published about her life and particularly her work as a missionary.<sup>25</sup> She had been born in Ipswich in 1866 but nothing is said about her education. She is described as capable and energetic and, more significantly, self-denying. She was a devoted daughter. Her life appears to have centred around her local church where she was a Sunday school teacher, secretary of the Total Abstinence Society and also the Band of Hope, a member of the British Women's Temperance Society and the Girls' Friendly Society. Her minister seems to have inspired an interest in missions in her. The CMS had doubts about her suitability as a wife and initially refused to permit the marriage. It seems likely this was either because of her age (36) or because of her health. The CMS relented under pressure from the local missionaries and she married the Rev. Harry Castle, CMS missionary in the Temne country in Sierra Leone, in November 1902. They sailed the same month to live in Port Lokkah, Sierra Leone. Nina is described as a 'faithful and devoted wife, a patient and capable mistress'. Her first impressions of West Africa were very favourable; she wrote 'It seems like a dream, a wondrously pretty scene, all looking so picturesque'. She travelled in a hammock to her future home. Although she enjoyed the journey she was uncomfortable at being carried on 'those poor men's heads'. She was very philosophical about the sleeping on the floor and about the many rats at their halfway stop.

Nina continued her philanthropic work in Sierra Leone with a Bible class for women, a night school for local West African soldiers whilst also working in the dispensary and occasionally itinerating with her husband. Itineration involved four carriers taking the food, pots and pans, a magic lantern, clothing and beds and folding chairs.

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<sup>25</sup> Emily Symonds, *Nina Castle* (London: Marshall, nd).

The magic lantern shows which her husband gave were popular with 100-200 people attending. She worked hard at learning the local language, Temne, and took confirmation classes in her husband's absence. The dispensary work grew and Nina was responsible for preparing the medicines and organising the patients as well as doing the dressings. She continued to correspond with her former minister in Ipswich and explained to him how much better it was for her husband to be married since he had been prone to breakdowns when on his own. Mostly she thought well of the local Africans and was particularly attracted to African children whom she considered to be much the same as children at home except for their black faces. She sent home a Temne pocket knife which she considered '...not bad work for an untaught native'.<sup>26</sup>

Towards the end of 1903, just after one year in Sierra Leone, she caught malaria and was very ill. The use of quinine as a prophylactic was well-known by that date so she was very unfortunate. Although there was a sanatorium in the Leicester Mountains behind Freetown, this was used for the less seriously ill, more as a convalescent home. Nina was taken to Madeira suffering not only from malaria but also acute dyspepsia and anaemia where she died on 1st December 1903, aged 37. She had been accompanied by the wife of the principal of Fourah Bay College who sent a long description of Nina's last days to her mother. It has been suggested that such death bed scenes had an almost sacramental function within an evangelical experience.<sup>27</sup> A memorial address was given by her former minister, the Rev. King at St. John's, Ipswich which emphasised her unselfishness and missionary zeal. The author of the book chose to write an epitaph of three verses of which the last reads:

From girlhood's home to home of wedded love  
And missionary zeal on Afric's shore,  
Thence - upward to the perfect love above,  
To rest in God: AT HOME for evermore.

This suggests that Nina's sacrifice in Sierra Leone had not been in vain and had earned her a seat in a higher place above. The book is much less adulatory than it might have been. Nevertheless it tries to inject a spirit of heroism into the life of someone whose achievements were not very notable and perhaps could not have been

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 103.

because of the short time spent at missionary work. The early death was a reminder that the ultimate sacrifice was still demanded for those who took up the missionary banner but that the rewards were also there. Death was not seen as the end but the gate to heaven or hell, what has been called 'the final all - divine judgement'.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore her death was a reminder of mortality and that the survivors needed to put their own lives in order in case death came early to them, too.

If the volume on Nina Castle was modestly bound in cloth, the memorial to Annie Walsh who died in 1855 aged 22 years, was enclosed within a presentation case and the book itself had an elaborate cover of watered silk with gold lettering and embossed corners.<sup>29</sup> It was circulated privately. The copy in the British Library was given to Sir Culling Eardley, suggesting that the Walsh family was well connected. Annie Walsh's father was the first incumbent of Christ Church, Warminster where there is a memorial plaque to her. Annie Walsh gave her name to the girls' secondary school in Freetown, Sierra Leone which was run by the CMS (see Chapter IV). This was the first secondary school for girls in West Africa and was to provide a model for other girls' schools in the area. On New Year's Eve in 1853 she chose as her motto 'Accepted in the Beloved' which was taken from the New Testament's Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians, Chapter 1, verse 6, the full text of which reads 'To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved'. This was apparently the first entry in her new pocket book for the year. There is no explanation of her reasons for choosing the motto but it implies an even greater commitment on her part than hitherto to the work of God.

Annie Walsh was well travelled and well educated. She included in her visits one to North Wales with her uncle and aunt in 1851 and in 1852 she visited Oxford and Blenheim. She enjoyed the Great Exhibition of 1851 but found it '...melancholy to see thousands of people to whom the world is all'.<sup>30</sup> In 1854 she visited Paris with her parents where she 'peeped' at fashionable French society but thought them 'poor butterfly people'. She also visited the tomb of the Emperor Napoleon where she

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<sup>28</sup> William Lawrence Burn, *The Age of Equipoise* (London: Unwin University Books, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Maria Drummond Walsh, *Dear Annie: A Brief Memorial of Annie Walsh* (London: 1855).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 12

reflected how much better it was to have victory through the 'Blood of the Lamb' than the victories of Marengo and Austerlitz. In 1855 she and her sister visited Scotland including Sir Walter Scott's home, Abbotsford, reflecting an interest in his novels.

She was educated at home and is described in the memorial as precocious. Her father was involved in her education but it is not clear whether others were, possibly not.

She appears to have been a diligent and intelligent student. When at home she spent her mornings studying, including Latin and some philosophical and scientific work. Her afternoons were a little more leisurely but still involved preparing Latin lessons for her father. She was a keen reader of the classics. She wrote a considerable amount of poetry and some is reproduced in the memorial. She was also keen on sketching. Some of this intellectual activity found an output in her contributions to the 'Questioning Society' and she recorded that she enjoyed the research and writing. Her topics included the kinds of idolatry found in the Bible, the origins of words such as sterling and 'wars heal'. Her contributions are thoughtful and, of their kind, useful.

She was very involved with a Bible class for the young women who worked in the local factory, many of whom would have been older than Annie herself. In 1853 she organised a tea party for them although she herself was not present at the actual tea but appeared later to organise the games which lasted three hours. On New Year's Eve 1853 she wrote a three page letter to 'My Dear Girls'. She believed that some of the girls had not married well and therefore she should give the others advice on their mode of living. She told them that their dress should be neat but plain, that they should be careful what company they kept and especially that they should not marry 'into sin and misery'. In addition there was a story for them about the bells in the church as though they could speak.

At the beginning of 1855 Annie spent a week at Bath which may seem a frivolous activity for such a serious minded person. She returned with a cold and became steadily more ill, presumably developing pneumonia. Feeling herself sinking she held a long conversation with her parents which '... had all the air of a final interview between friends that were parting for a longish voyage'. She selected the text for her

monument (accepted in the beloved) as well as her funeral service arrangements. At her funeral the sermon preached emphasised that she had fulfilled every duty of a daughter and sister, always seeking the pleasures of others.

There is little in the memorial to Annie Walsh to suggest that she had a special interest either in missionary work or in Africa. She attended at least one missionary meeting in London but this would not have been unusual for someone with evangelical beliefs. She left her savings, which would have been small, to be divided between the CMS, the Bible Society and the Pastoral Aid Society but again this would not have been unusual. Looking at the work which she did with her factory girls she would have been very comfortable with being a missionary either as a teacher or as a wife which would have been the two options open to her in missionary work at the time. There is no indication that she was interested in either option. Yet her death was used to raise funds to finance the building of a secondary school for girls in Sierra Leone with the not inconsiderable sum of £2,500 collected. Her mother retained a long connection with Annie Walsh School helping to raise a further £600 in 1890 to pay off the school's debts and to contribute towards a development fund. An article in the *CM Gleaner* of 1916 referred to Annie Walsh as someone '...who had ardently longed to be a missionary'.<sup>31</sup> She represented unimpeachable virtue and impeccable character. Her death, tragic though it was, was not the result of an accident, but this was what came to be believed.<sup>32</sup> Because of her youth and early death, she achieved the status of a heroine and the CMS was able to use this in the promotion of its activities.

Shortly after the death of his wife in August 1845 from puerperal fever, the Rev. Bultmann, trained at the Basel Missionary Seminary but employed by the CMS in Sierra Leone for 22 years, wrote a 'Memoir of Mrs. F. Bultmann, formerly Lina Wilkens' (see Appendix V). This was intended for circulation among fellow missionaries in West Africa. It was a fairly common practice to produce this type of memorial, particularly where the person had died sacrificing their life for the

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<sup>31</sup> *CM Gleaner* 'Jubilee of Happy Memories', March 1916 p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989 - School's Register and History, nd., p viiii.



missionary cause.<sup>33</sup> It was also, apparently, particularly a German practice and was often used as the basis for a short book about the life of the deceased. Such memorials can be seen as having a variety of purposes, not least was the release of grief. Perhaps just as an important was the example set for others to follow. The English of the memoir is little strange in places but the Rev. Bultmann was not writing in his native tongue. Lina was the Rev. Bultmann's second wife and he went on to marry for a third time, surviving to retire to Germany.

Lina had become an orphan at the age of nine but little is said about her upbringing in Bremen. The fact that she seems to have served a fairly long apprenticeship in a number of households learning domestic duties suggests that she did not have a home or relation with whom she lived. It is surprising that there is no information on who had brought her up. The Rev. Bultmann suggests that it was common for middle class daughters to serve such an apprenticeship but Lina's seems to have been extraordinarily long and perhaps was a way of occupying her. It would seem that she was still working in this way just prior to her marriage. The Rev. Bultmann is able to use this to show that his wife was used to working for others and to turning the other cheek. He also felt that from early on that she had a desire to work in Africa, although this may just be fond imagining. A number of women missionaries were orphans, for example Hannah Kilham and Anna Hinderer and this may have been one factor in a decision to undertake missionary work. Without close blood ties it would have been easier to make the decision. Curiously there is no reference to Lina's sister who joined the family in Sierra Leone. However it is emphasised that Lina was very popular in her native town, Bremen. There is great deal about her early years there, perhaps disproportionately so to the account of her stay in Sierra Leone which would have been of more interest to fellow missionaries, even if her time there was less than two years.

The Rev. Bultmann is concerned to show that his wife received a good education, although her knowledge seems more eclectic than systematic. It may be that he chose

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<sup>33</sup> *CM Gleaner* 'Death of Mrs White of Otta, wife of Rev. J. White, native minister', October 1867, pp. 99-105.

to emphasise those aspects of her education which he felt made his wife someone special rather than the more mundane educational topics. Her education, however, seems to have progressed well beyond music, drawing and French which would have been the obvious subjects for her to learn. Many of the authors which she read are not familiar, although they may well have been to many of the other fellow missionaries who were also from Germany. She read Hannah More but not Mary Wollstonecraft. It is interesting that the Rev. Bultmann mentions that his wife read Sir Walter Scott. Early Evangelicals in England did not approve of him and the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1818 condemned the glut of poetical romances and tales produced by Scott and others, although other evangelicals appeared to have enjoyed Scott's depiction of medieval life and manners.<sup>34</sup> When Scott died in 1832 the *Methodist Magazine* considered that his novels had done much to make the novel genre respectable but 'Their capital defect is that they appear to have been written without any moral aim'.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps in Germany a different view was taken. Whatever Lina Bultmann read, her husband considered that she always put duty before pleasure. She had a practical mind but this may just be a way of saying that she did not understand, and was not encouraged to understand, the doctrines of the church. In any case what seems to have been important was her love of God and it is implied that this was more significant than all the knowledge in the world.

The *CM Gleaner* published 'Lines on a missionary's wife who died at Sierra Leone in 1844' which included the lines:-

'She knew she had given her all to God,  
And was His for life or death'

Mrs. Bultmann was only one of the many missionary wives who 'gave her all' and died at a young age in West Africa. Denied the elaborate ceremonial associated with the Victorian way of death because of the need for rapid burial in the heat and dampness of West African climate, mourners found consolation and expression of feelings in the memorial book to the deceased. What may seem today as a public

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<sup>34</sup> Doreen M. Rosman, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 186.

intrusion into a private death acquired a significance which it was felt had to be recorded. The memorial was designed to elicit a specific response from its readers.

The changing image of the heroine in the early twentieth century as portrayed by the missionary press can be shown by looking at the story of Edith Warner (see App. VI, Figure 4) who worked in Nigeria for thirty-three years for the CMS. Although seen as 'the heroine of the mission' the book shows a very different slant on what makes a heroine. The book was written by the Rev. Basden who was Archdeacon of the Niger and better known for his work on the Ibo people(see Chapter VI). The book about Edith Warner was published in 1927 and is sub-titled 'The Story of 33 years of Zealous and Courageous Work Amongst Ibo girls and women'. Edith Warner is described as a heroine. This image of a heroine can be contrasted with the work by Edwin Dawson, discussed earlier, on heroines of missionary adventure which refers to their work among 'uncivilized man, wild beasts and forces of nature'.

Edith Warner was born in 1867 and decided to become a missionary at the age of 13 as a result it is said of attending a missionary garden party.<sup>36</sup> The reasons for her decision must be more complex than this but no further information is given. She trained at The Willows, the CMS missionary college for women (see Chapter II) and in 1892 joined the Niger Mission accompanying Bishop and Mrs. Hill where he replaced Samuel Crowther as bishop. Edith Warner was appointed to Onitsha where there was also a Catholic mission which included nuns although she appears to have had nothing to do them. This seems likely given the antipathy which existed between Catholic and Protestant missions. Onitsha was the headquarters of the Niger mission, having been started by Samuel Crowther in 1857 so it was well established. It was an important Ibo town some 140 miles inland on the east bank of the Niger.

Edith Warner went to Onitsha as a teacher. In 1895 she opened a boarding school for girls with nine pupils which soon expanded to twenty-four. By 1906 there were fifty pupils. In 1899 a nursery was opened for abandoned babies, particularly twins but also including babies whose upper teeth came through before the bottom ones and

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<sup>36</sup> George Thomas Basden, *Edith Warner of the Niger* (London: Seeling Service & Co., 1927), p. 16.

who were then abandoned by their mothers. At the school two hours a day were spent on teaching the girls domestic duties and four hours on lessons. Edith Warner became the organist at the local church and the girls from her school formed the choir, an innovation at the time within the Church of England. Although fees were introduced at the school, these were on a means tested basis and the children of those parents who could not pay were supported by the mission and their friends. Basden suggests that Edith Warner adapted her teaching to local circumstances but does not go into details.<sup>37</sup> She was said to be the best Ibo speaker of any European member of the Onitsha mission and this contributed to her understanding of local circumstances. She also had 'taboo' children as pupils - there were seven in 1906, a not inconsiderable proportion out of fifty pupils in total. The school moved to new premises, five miles east of Onitsha and paid for by the Hon. Mrs. Portman. The new premises included a house for the European staff, dormitories and classrooms. Later the school was renamed St. Monica's, which, although today may seem like a parody, was presumably intended to show the heights which the school wished to attain, that of a girls' public school. Later school houses were introduced as well as girl guides, all in line with such ambitions.

So far as the girls were concerned, the school provided an opportunity for undergoing secondary education. The older girls were encouraged to join the medical mission in Onitsha and, when teacher training classes were introduced at the school, to train as pupil teachers. By 1911 the girls were taking part in the evangelisation of the area near to Onitsha, visiting the selected town and paying the salary of an evangelist. The school became government assisted which meant it had reached certain minimum standards and this was seen as endorsing the school's education policy. The girls subsequently became the wives of teachers, evangelists, pastors, traders, clerks and mechanics, belying any suggestions that educated girls found it difficult to get married, although this information may be inaccurate. Besides her work as a teacher and headmistress, Edith Warner travelled during the holidays throughout Nigeria, her first journey being to the hinterland and to the west side of the Niger. She usually had

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

a companion or was part of a group and was allowed to preach from time to time. She does not appear to have any particular interest in reaching out to African women.

Biographies and memorials such as those discussed above are necessarily selective, whether intentionally or not. Edith Simcox, commenting in 1861 on autobiographies but her comments are equally applicable to biographies, wrote that 'No autobiographies are intentional throughout...but there are varieties of falsehood and degrees of truth. Facts and intentions admit equally of misstatement; real actions may be explained erroneously and imaginary conduct accounted for by real motives.'<sup>38</sup> The Victorian reader would have been aware of this warning when reading the various missionary publications.

### III Nineteenth-Century Fiction

Missionary women were reticent about their personal life so little is known about their reading habits. It is very doubtful that they read novels whilst in West Africa - they took themselves far too seriously to find time for such an activity once they were missionaries, although such books would have been available at home. Their reading material was likely to concentrate on sermons and similar works. Nevertheless the later Victorians were great readers of novels and middle-class women were among the most avid of readers. An article in 1842 in the *Church of England Quarterly* maintained that 'The bulk of novel readers are females. They have more time to indulge'.<sup>39</sup> In 1870 Trollope declared that '... we have become a novel-reading people. Novels are in the hands of all of us.'<sup>40</sup> They became a form of escapism for bored middle-class women who could identify with the heroine.<sup>41</sup> The idea of becoming a heroine was felt to liberate a woman from feeling that she was someone of no account.<sup>42</sup> Even those who were illiterate could attend public readings or could hear others reading the books. The great novels of the day were serialised in the

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<sup>38</sup> *North British Review* 1869 Quoted in Kate Flint, *The Women Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 392.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Robin Gilmour, *The Novel in the Victorian Age: A Modern Introduction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Kate Flint, *The Women Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> Rachel M. Brownstein, *Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. xix.

popular magazines such as *Household Words*, of which Dickens himself was editor. The circulating libraries, for example Mudie's, himself a man of evangelical sympathies, made novels available at a cost which the middle class at least could afford.<sup>43</sup> At W. H. Smith shops, copies were available too at a moderate cost after a certain period of time since the booksellers made more money from the expensive three volume novel than producing cheap editions. No novelist could afford to offend either. The reading public grew as literacy increased, especially after the educational reforms of 1870. David Skilton has suggested that, for the Victorians, theirs was the age of the novel.<sup>44</sup> He has also suggested that it was not considered strange for novels to deal with the issues of the day, for example, the state of the prisons in *Pickwick Papers* and of the civil service in *Little Dorrit*.<sup>45</sup> Barbara Dennis has similarly emphasised this role for the novel, suggesting that 'conditions of England' novels which looked at the social, economic and political upheavals of the 19th century played an important part in the popularity and significance of the novel in the 1840s.<sup>46</sup> Novels can therefore be said to be tracts for their times and also to reflect the concerns of the time. The Victorian novelists wanted their books to be read so they were concerned to offer the public what they were interested in. During the 18th century novels had been largely regarded as fit only for the idle and frivolous. This attitude was reinforced by the strong evangelical and utilitarian currents in the early 19th century.<sup>47</sup> However as the novel grew in moral status and acceptability, reading them became respectable in the later 19th century. The many female authors of the period contributed to this growth in acceptability. By 1901 the novel was seen as the highest of literary genres.<sup>48</sup> It was more popular than Victorian poetry e.g. Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* or Tennyson's *The Princess*, which are often quoted in historical texts. Edward Said has emphasised how important the novel was in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences.<sup>49</sup> He suggests that

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> David Skilton, ed., *The Early and Mid-Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Dennis, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: a study in the rhetoric of authorship* (New York: AMS Press, 1982), p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Barbara Dennis, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. xii.

stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about the strange regions of the world.

How far historians can use fiction in their research is open to debate. Leonee Ormond has argued that fiction and history are kindred forms and that as late as the 18th century, history was regarded as literary art.<sup>50</sup> She goes on to argue that both fiction and history are narrative structures, concerned with the behaviour of human beings and with the passage of time. She suggests that modern historians, who are wary of using fiction as source material, stress the scientific accuracy of their own discipline although choice and discrimination work to produce an individual construct, not a set of statistics. J. Smarr has suggested that the novel blends history, myth and fiction.<sup>51</sup> If this is accepted, then the historian has the difficult task of teasing out these three elements in the novel. M. Poovey has argued that 'To reposition a literary text in the historically specific discussion, one must locate systems of textual details that also belong to other contemporary debates. This involves using secondary histories to identify these debates, locating contemporary sources that participated in them, and reading the literary text for its treatment of the issues involved in the debate being analysed i.e. working between literary and non-literary texts.'<sup>52</sup> This raises the question of how much to engage with contemporary theory. Owen Chadwick in his two volume work *The Victorian Church* has numerous references to the novels of Anthony Trollope, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte. The *Spectator* in an obituary of Trollope said that for future generations Trollope's works '... picture the society of our day with a fidelity with which society has never been pictured before in the history of the world.'<sup>53</sup> E. Binns suggests in his volume on religion in the Victorian era that literature (and art) not only reflect the conditions of the time but also play a part in moulding them.<sup>54</sup> This is particularly relevant when thinking about

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<sup>50</sup> Leonee Ormond, 'Painting and the Past' in *Essays & Studies 1991- History and the Novel* ed. by Angus Easson (English Association: Brewer, 1991), pp. 1-13 (p.1).

<sup>51</sup> Janet Levarie Smarr, 'Introduction', in *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory* ed. by Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 1-21 (p. 14).

<sup>52</sup> Mary Poovey 'Reading History in Literature: Speculation and Virtue in *Our Mutual Friend*', *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory* ed. by Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 42-80 (p.47).

<sup>53</sup> *Spectator* xiii 9 December 1882, 1574.

<sup>54</sup> Leonard Elliot Elliot-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1936), p. 338.



religion. Nevertheless it is as well to remember that ‘... a novel [is] an imaginative construct replete with paradox and multiple possibilities, not a position paper ...’<sup>55</sup>

The public reception of the novel at the time is also important as are the size of sales and the critics’ comments. Much has been written about the major authors of the 19th century which can provide some insight into why they wrote what they did. Novels can also provide a point of reference for their time through the events described. Barbara Dennis has suggested that they act as a record of Victorian values as proposed by the middle-class.<sup>56</sup> J. Banks has written that it is the imaginative aspects of fiction which makes the historian wary of using it as source material but considers that the historian should have sufficient knowledge to distinguish fact and fiction.<sup>57</sup> He suggests that all novels can be used as historical documents provided they are treated like any other sources. This part of the chapter looks at the way in which both evangelical and missionary women are shown in Victorian fiction. It was the evangelical missionary societies who provided the missionaries for most of West Africa in the 19th century. Evangelical religion was not without its critics. Gosse wrote in 1907 that it ‘... sets up a vain chimerical ideal in the barren pursuit of which all the tender, indulgent affections, all the genial play of life ... are exchanged for what is harsh and void and negative’.<sup>58</sup>

It seems appropriate to discuss both evangelical and missionary women even though only a tiny proportion of evangelical women ever went out as missionaries. An understanding of how they were perceived through fiction helps towards a greater understanding of public perceptions of missionary women as part of the philanthropic movement of the period. The ‘women question’ aroused great interest among the Victorians as women’s role in society began to be redefined and this may account for some of the interest by novelists in missionary women. The authors which have been looked at span almost the whole of the 19th century, including two female writers,

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<sup>55</sup> Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 327.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Dennis, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Ambrose Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of family planning among the Victorian middle classes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 127.

<sup>58</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994), p. 208.

Charlotte Bronte and Charlotte M. Yonge, and one American writer, Herman Melville. The other authors examined are Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. The general approach has been to look at what the authors wrote about missionary and evangelical women, to look at this within the context of the book, to look at the authors' backgrounds and interests, and to look at how the novels were received at the time.

In 1846 Herman Melville's first work, *Typee: Four Months' Residence in the Marquesas*, was published and this was followed in 1847 by a sequel entitled *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*. These have been described as a mixture of 'fact and fiction, reality and romance'.<sup>59</sup> Melville, an American, had visited the South Sea islands as a sailor but the extent to which he embellished his experiences in the two novels is not known. They describe life in the Polynesian islands in terms of admiration and contain severe criticisms of the colonisers and missionaries. He placed much of the blame for the degradation of the inhabitants on the Sandwich Island Mission which was run by American Congregationalists. Melville maintained the verity of his observations in the two books, 'trusting that his anxious desire to speak the unvarnished truth will gain for him the confidence of his readers'.<sup>60</sup> In his preface to *Omoo* he wrote that 'In every statement connected with missionary operations a strict adherence to facts has been adhered to'.<sup>61</sup> In fact Melville deleted the appendix dealing with missionaries from the American edition after the Presbyterian paper, *The Evangelist*, began a crusade against the book's condemnation of missionary activities in Hawaii.<sup>62</sup> The *Christian Parlor Magazine* noted in September 1846 that most of the parts to which it objected in *Typee* had by then been removed. The English editions remained unexpurgated, although there were a number of criticisms from reviewers in England who thought his comments on missionaries were at the very least unnecessary. Reviewers were split into two camps; some for the secular press were prepared to accept Melville's account of the missionaries whereas

<sup>59</sup> Herman Melville, *Typee: Four Months' Residence in the Marquesas* (London: KPI, 1985), p. v.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. xix.

<sup>61</sup> Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (New York: Hendricks House Inc., 1969), Preface p. x.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Higgins & Hershel Parker *Herman Melville The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. ix.

reviewers from the Protestant religious press protested its falseness.<sup>63</sup> For example *The Harbinger* (Massachusetts) in April 1846 wrote that they

‘..were painfully impressed by the fact that the conversion of the islanders to Christianity had also converted them into the slaves of their benefactors and that even the wife of a missionary could drive them like beasts before her carriage.’<sup>64</sup>

This criticism refers to a paragraph in *Typee* where Melville describes how one missionary wife has a carriage drawn by two South Sea islanders and, when it gets bogged down, she refuses to get out to make it easier to extricate the carriage.<sup>65</sup> In *Omoo*, the sequel to *Typee*, Melville is critical of the sewing taught by missionary women to Tahitian girls; he particularly dislikes the hats, which he described as having ‘a bunch of straw, plaited in the shape of a coal-scuttle and stuck bolt upright on the crown.’<sup>66</sup> They were ugly in a particularly Victorian way but the unspoken criticism is that they were alien to the local inhabitants. However, it has been suggested that, although the work of missionaries is attacked, Melville admits that they had tried hard to mitigate the evils arising from commerce.<sup>67</sup> Another criticism by Melville was that in a seminary set up for children, the two races were kept apart, which can be seen as a variation on sending children to the home country to be looked after in a mission’s children’s home. J. E. Miller has suggested that the real villain in *Omoo* is civilisation, which Melville himself partially admitted.<sup>68</sup> This had corrupted the South Sea Islanders from their Rousseau-like type of innocence. Miller also suggests that Melville singled out missionaries for special mention because the gap between their aims and their achievements was so great.<sup>69</sup> This type of criticism was particularly aimed at evangelicals and was echoed by later writers. It was emphasised by the *New York Evening Mirror* in May 1847 which described missionaries as

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. xii.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> Herman Melville, *Typee: Four Months’ Residence in the Marquesas* (London: KPI, 1985), p. 218.

<sup>66</sup> Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (New York: Hendricks House Inc., 1969), p. 177.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. xxxv.

<sup>68</sup> James Edwin Miller, *A Reader’s Guide to Herman Melville* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1962), p. 26.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

deluded philanthropists who had built up an immense institution and deluded the natives into thinking that it was for their own good.<sup>70</sup>

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 and is probably one of the most well-known pieces of fiction that discusses missionaries. The Comaroffs, for example, in their work *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* discuss Charlotte Brontë's attitudes towards missionaries although they are more interested in St. John Rivers than in Jane Eyre as a missionary wife for him in India.<sup>71</sup> Charlotte Brontë was the daughter of an evangelical clergyman.<sup>72</sup> This may have given the book a certain authority although this fact was concealed at the date of publication. St. John Rivers offers marriage without love, a marriage of duty and service to a cause - that of patriarchal religion, self-denying, stern, prideful and ascetic: He for God only, she for God in him.<sup>73</sup> It is further suggested that St. John offers the deepest lure for a spiritual woman, that of adopting a man's cause and making it her own. An alternative view would be that St. John Rivers was using Jane Eyre for his own ends although he saw the missionary life as offering the greatest sacrifice that there could be - giving one's own life. Missionary work was dangerous but there is a certain element of melodrama in Jane Eyre's conviction that she will die in India. Going to India as a missionary was probably no more dangerous than going out as the wife of a colonial administrator. Other places in the world, such as West Africa, were far more life threatening but even there some missionaries and their wives lived to a considerable age (see Chapter III). Jane Eyre perpetuates the myth of the missionary heroine, in her case with the expectation of being sacrificed twice, once to St. John Rivers and then to a glorious martyrdom. He appears only three-quarters way through the novel, almost as a coda to it. The purpose is to contrast his life with that of Rochester's earthiness and to underline the choice of life which faces Jane Eyre. Life with St. John Rivers

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<sup>70</sup> Brian Higgins & Hershel Parker *Herman Melville The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 110.

<sup>71</sup> Jean Comaroff & John Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution* 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), I pp. 49-51.

<sup>72</sup> Ian C. Bradley *The Call to Seriousness: the Evangelical Impact on Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 188.

<sup>73</sup> Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre* Norton Critical Edition (London: W. N. Norton & Co., 2001), p. 480.

is arid but part of a higher purpose ordained by God, whereas Rochester offers a 'normal' life of domesticity and a genuine love. As the daughter of an evangelical Church of England minister, Charlotte Bronte would have heard her father and others preaching the gospel of the evangelicals from the pulpit and it is difficult to believe that she is intending to criticise women going out as missionary wives. Her readers, drawn from the middle class and used to epic tales of missionary exploits as portrayed by a missionary press ever mindful of the need to keep up interest in their work, would not see the choice which Jane Eyre has to make in such stark terms as later readers, less in tune with the missionary process, might. For example, a later writer has represented her marriage to St. John Rivers as suttee from within.<sup>74</sup> It has been suggested that *Jane Eyre* is unique in looking at the parallel aspects of home and overseas mission work exclusively in terms of women and wives. There is a contradiction in trying to emancipate indigenous women and in not trying to challenge the kinds of subordination required of married European women.<sup>75</sup> Jane Eyre is willing to go as the equal of Rivers but he wants a helpmeet and domination.<sup>76</sup>

St. John Rivers provides an interesting description of how he saw the work of a missionary wife:

In the village school I found you could perform well, punctually, uprightly, labour uncongenial to your habits and inclinations; I saw you could perform it with capacity and tact: you could win while you were controlled..... I recognised a soul that revelled in the flame and excitement of sacrifice....I acknowledge the complement of the qualities I seek, Jane, you are docile, diligent, disinterested, faithfull, constant, and courageous; very gentle and very heroic; ...<sup>77</sup>

These are not qualities to be despised. In a report of 1876, the Female Association for Promoting Christianity among the Women of the East, formed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1873, included submission, love, tenderness, self-

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<sup>74</sup> Carl Plasa & Betty J. Ring, eds, *The Discourse of Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> Valentine Cunningham, "God and Nature Intended You for a Missionary's Wife": Mary Hill, Jane Eyre and Other Missionary Women in the 1840s', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present* ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener, (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 85-105 (p. 98).

<sup>76</sup> Inderpal Grewall, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 61.

<sup>77</sup> Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 399.

sacrifice, devotedness and sympathy among the necessary aptitudes which women should have for missionary work.<sup>78</sup> A report at the 1910 World Missionary Conference warned about the negative qualities of women in that they were emotional and less controlled.<sup>79</sup> These comments tie in well with St. John Rivers' evaluation of Jane Eyre's qualities as a missionary wife. Charlotte Brontë's knowledge of the duties of a missionary wife is likely to have been acquired from the missionary journals of the time to which her father would have subscribed and from missionaries on leave who might have visited the area. Some of her readers, too, would have taken the missionary journals even though probably the most well-known of them, the *CM Intelligencer*, did not start publication until 1849, two years after *Jane Eyre* was published. Charlotte Brontë also had access to her father's library which included both Scott, of whom Charlotte was very fond, and Byron, including the licentious *Don Juan*.<sup>80</sup> Her aunt who lived with them took the *Ladies Magazine* which had stories of the aristocracy.<sup>81</sup> In contrast Charlotte Brontë also read Virgil and Ovid but not, it seems, writers like Jane Austen and Mary Shelley although she did read Dickens and Harriet Martineau. St. John Rivers' desideratum of the qualities needed in a missionary wife are very much gathered at second-hand and as mediated by the missionary press. They are views which were likely to be acceptable to those who were interested in missionary work and represent no challenge to the stereotype of the missionary wife. It has been argued that *Jane Eyre* does not reject missionary work because of any serious questioning of missionary aims but because of unease about the demands placed upon women by patriarchal Christianity.<sup>82</sup> *Jane Eyre* was described by Lady Eastlake, a contemporary and wife of the president of the Royal Academy, as '... pre-eminently an anti-Christian

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<sup>78</sup> Myrtle Hill 'Women in the Irish Protestant Movements c. 1873-1914: Representations and Motivations', in *Missions and Missionaries*, ed. by Pieter Holtrop & Hugh McLeod (Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2000), pp. 170-185 (p. 173).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 173.

<sup>80</sup> Lyndall Gordon, *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> Sean Gill, 'Heroines of Missionary Adventure: The Portrayal of Victorian Women Missionaries in Popular Fiction and Biography', in *Women of Faith in Victorian England* ed. by Anne Hogan & Andrew Bradstock, (London: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 172-183 (p. 172).



composition'.<sup>83</sup> However it helps to promote the image of the missionary heroine which was to feature prominently in missionary publications.

Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* was started in 1851 and published in 1853 so it is only slightly later than *Jane Eyre*. At the time it sold over 35,000 copies a part, 10,000 more than *David Copperfield*.<sup>84</sup> In this book, Dickens criticised the missionary societies heavily. In Dickens' eyes, missionaries were 'perfect nuisances' who 'leave the place worse than they found it' and he was particularly dismayed by overseas missionary activity, which was regarded by many as the leading philanthropic cause of the time.<sup>85</sup> It has been suggested that Dickens' treatment of women is '...a conservative, even nostalgic, recuperation of the domesticated female...'<sup>86</sup> Barbara Dennis believes that Mrs. Clenman in *Little Dorrit* is the embodiment of everything negative about evangelicalism in that her religion, based on her selective study of the Bible, is part of the imprisonment which is the dominant image of the novel.<sup>87</sup> Dickens seems much more happy with Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* who expresses her wish '... to be as useful as I could, to render what kind services I could to those immediately around me and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself.' In 1853 Dickens published an essay satirically called *The Noble Savage*: 'cruel, false, thievish, murderous, addicted more or less to grease, entrails and beastly customs (the black man) is a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting, a conceited, tiresome, bloodthirsty, monotonous humbug.'<sup>88</sup> He also supported Governor Eyre in the Morant Bay revolt in 1865. In *Bleak House* all these strands come together in the person of Mrs. Jellyby. She has devoted her time, apart from producing a number of children, to promoting the growing of coffee on the banks of the Borrioboola Gha in West Africa, the improvement of 'the natives' and the

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<sup>83</sup> Patricia Tyler Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal 1837-1873* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 47.

<sup>84</sup> Graham Storey, *Dickens' Bleak House* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), p. 91.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Schlicke, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 83.

<sup>86</sup> Mary Poovey, 'Reading History in Literature: Speculation and Virtue in *Our Mutual Friend*' in *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory* ed. by Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 42-80 (p. 64).

<sup>87</sup> Barbara Dennis, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>88</sup> Mary Poovey, 'Reading History in Literature: Speculation and Virtue in *Our Mutual Friend*' in *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory* ed. by Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 42-80 (p. 70).



settlement of Britain's 'superabundant home population'.<sup>89</sup> In 1852 Lady Buxton, widow of Sir T. F. Buxton, had similar ideas and sent out bales of cotton and money to Sierra Leone to try to establish a trade in cotton.<sup>90</sup>

Mrs. Jellyby is reputedly based on Mrs. Caroline Chisholm who started the Family Colonization Loan Society which was supported by Dickens. She also established a Female Immigrants' Home in Sydney and published the 'ABC of Colonization'. Dickens wrote that he dreamt of Mrs. Chisholm and her housekeeping and also of the dirty faces of her children after he had been to her house in 1850. *Household Words* had a five page article on the Family Colonization Loan Society in the first issue. One biographer of Mrs. Chisholm has argued that perhaps Dickens intended Mrs. Jellyby to be in direct contrast to Mrs. Chisholm.<sup>91</sup> Elaine Showalter has suggested that caricatures like Mrs. Jellyby spread the stereotype of 'the frowzy career woman'.<sup>92</sup> Philip Curtin has suggested that Mrs. Jellyby is a parody of all that was narrow, impractical and inhumane in the humanitarianism of Exeter Hall.<sup>93</sup> In *Bleak House*, there is a chapter called 'telescopic philanthropy' in which Mrs. Jellyby is introduced and where her handsome eyes can see nothing nearer than Africa. Dickens was concerned that foreign missions were diverting resources away from the problems at home; for example, Jo, the orphaned and neglected crossing sweeper, eats his frugal meal on the steps of the offices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The inference is that the Society is ignoring problems of poverty and hunger at home. This was a topic echoed by later writers, for example by William Booth's *In Darkest England and the way out* (1890) and in Margaret Harkness's novel *In Darkest London* (1891) where parallels are drawn between the African jungle and the urban jungle at home.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Charles Dickens, *Bleak House Norton Critical Edition* (New York: Norton & Co., 1997), Ch. IV.

<sup>90</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M15 Rev. Peyton to CMS Secretary 13 July 1852.

<sup>91</sup> Mary Hoban, *Fifty-One Pieces of Wedding Cake: A Biography of Caroline Chisholm* (Victoria: Lowden Publishing Co., 1973), p. 306.

<sup>92</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (London: Virago, 1978), p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 343.

<sup>94</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 5.

Charitable works by the middle class, particularly women, show that all such efforts were not diverted abroad (see, for example Frank Prochaska's *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England*). By the third quarter of the 19th century women's work had expanded to Ragged School teaching, superintendence of reformatories, workhouse visiting, rescue work, housing and planning.<sup>95</sup> It seems plausible that those who supported foreign missions were also contributors to other charities.

The scheme for Borrioboola Gha does not come to fruition. It is thought that Dickens is referring to the Niger Expedition of 1841 when T. F. Buxton with the help of the Gurneys and some other Quaker friends raised £4,000 to start a model farm on the Niger. The Church Missionary Society was closely involved. The scheme was attacked by *The Times* and the *Edinburgh Review*. *The Times* 'distinguished itself by its vehement attacks on the whole scheme'.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless the scheme had the approval of Prince Albert. Eugene Stock in Volume 1 of his *History of the Church Missionary Society* has a footnote reminding readers of 'Dickens' clever caricature of the scheme, in his picture (in *Bleak House*) of Mrs. Jellyby and Borrioboola Gha ...'<sup>97</sup> When the scheme failed, Mrs. Jellyby turned her attention to the rights of women to sit in Parliament of which both Dickens and Queen Victoria disapproved. Both Lord Denman and J. S. Mill resented the way Mrs. Jellyby was portrayed by Dickens. Lord Denman held her to be a gross libel on the philanthropic cause of slave emancipation.<sup>98</sup> J. S. Mill felt that Dickens had ridiculed the rights of women. *The Illustrated London News* considered Mrs. Jellyby to be an admirable effort.<sup>99</sup> Possibly her main fault was seen as not her involvement with Africa but that she neglected her family, the most precious of Victorian institutions. Dickens has used his biting satire to condemn the activities of the missionary societies, although he is concerned more to condemn the motives of the people involved. He chose to do this through a woman to make it doubly effective, though at the time the contribution by women to missionary

<sup>95</sup> Patricia Tyler Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal 1837-1873* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., I p. 454.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 454.

<sup>98</sup> Anthony Edward Dyson, ed., *Dickens' Bleak House: A Casebook* (London: MacMillan, 1969), p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

activities was largely unacknowledged. Dickens was not alone in mocking the evangelicals' sympathy with Africans - *Punch* did the same in August 1850.<sup>100</sup> Earlier in 1844 it had criticised foreign missions - 'They have no taste for the destitution of the alley that abuts their dwelling place but how they glow, how they kindle at the misery somewhere in Africa'.<sup>101</sup> The criticism is that resources are being diverted abroad when they were badly needed at home. Nevertheless the philanthropic movement was too powerful to be seriously affected by this and Dickens' criticisms.<sup>102</sup>

Dickens objected to what he saw as the self-important and narrow-minded world of ladies' auxiliaries, ladies' committees and ladies' missions (see Chapter II), whilst recognising that valuable charitable work could be done by women.<sup>103</sup> Dickens does not address the question of whether they were in fact any different from similar societies run by men. He was, however, a friend for a while of the Victorian philanthropist, Angela Burdett Coutts, and helped to set up Urania Cottage, a home for the rehabilitation of prostitutes and women at risk. He also exposed the scandal of badly paid women's occupations. Despite this he subscribed to the Victorian idea of virtuous womanhood possessing powers to uplift, regenerate and redeem which was inextricably part of his idealisation of domestic life.<sup>104</sup> These were also some of the qualities which were seen as an essential part of the missionary process. Mrs. Jellyby was to become a byword for a woman who neglected her own family for philanthropic work, as for example in Gosse's *Father and Son*, where Edmund Gosse explains that although his mother was very involved in her philanthropy he did not wish it to be thought '... that I regard her as a Mrs. Jellyby...'.<sup>105</sup> For Dickens the true source of heroism was always in the domestic sphere or through a personal concern to help individuals, for example Elizabeth Fry or Grace Darling.<sup>106</sup> Anna Hinderer, a CMS missionary wife in Ibadan, felt similarly and kept a portrait of Elizabeth Fry in her

<sup>100</sup> Susan Shatto, *The Companion to Bleak House* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 55.

<sup>101</sup> *Punch* VI 1844, p. 210.

<sup>102</sup> Patricia Tyler Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal 1837-1873* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>103</sup> Paul Schlicke, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 84.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (London: J. M. Dent, 1983), p. 309.

<sup>105</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994), p. 50.

<sup>106</sup> Michael Slater, op. cit., p. 309.

bedroom at the mission house so the evangelicals and Dickens were not so far apart (see Chapter III).

Anthony Trollope was concerned with the condition of England. He had little sympathy with evangelicals. In *Framley Parsonage* there is a short passage about a lecture on behalf of sending missionaries to the South Sea Islands. Trollope treats this with some hilarity and shares in the delight that it finishes twenty minutes earlier than expected.<sup>107</sup> His humour is about Mrs. Proudie, who organised the lecture, rather than the mission. In the Barchester novels, particularly *Barchester Towers*, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* and *Framley Parsonage*, Mrs. Proudie, the evangelical Bishop's wife and niece of a Scottish earl, appears, described by Trollope in his autobiography as '... a tyrant, a bully, a would-be priestess, a very vulgar woman...but at the same time conscientious ... and anxious to save the souls around her ...'<sup>108</sup> She has been described as a 'triumphantly successful comic character' and this makes it difficult to take her seriously.<sup>109</sup> In two of Trollope's novels, *John Caldigate* and *Rachel Ray*, evangelical women have a prominent part. In his short story *Mary Gresley* the eponymous heroine eventually marries a missionary 'who was going out to some forlorn country on the confines of African colonisation' and where she dies. *Mary Gresley* was first published in *St. Paul's Magazine* of November 1869.<sup>110</sup>

Some of Trollope's most powerful writing is about women. Although he himself took a conservative view on women's role in society, he was interested in the 'woman question' and his novels look at access to employment, the inequality of marriage laws and the double standard of morality. Husbands are depicted as having tyrannical rights over women and fallen women are supported. One result of Trollope's lifelong aversion to evangelicalism was that he was at his happiest in describing the high church life of Barchester. His treatment of low church people is sometimes harsh, for example the Rev. Obadiah Slope in *Barchester Towers*. He shows no tolerance

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<sup>107</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (London: Trollope Society, 1996), Ch VI.

<sup>108</sup> Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London: Trollope Society, 1999), Ch. XV.

<sup>109</sup> R. C. Terry, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope* (Oxford: OUP, 1999) p. 450

<sup>110</sup> John Hampden, *Novels and Stories by Anthony Trollope* (London: Pilot Press, 1946), p. xv.

towards the evangelicals.<sup>111</sup> In *John Caldigate* (1879) Mrs. Bolton, a hard-line evangelical, shares the centre stage of the novel with the eponymous hero. The son of the local squire, he has made his fortune in Australia and returns to marry Mrs. Bolton's daughter. He is convicted of bigamy but eventually cleared. Mrs. Bolton divides people into the saved and the damned. She firmly believes that she is in the former group whereas John Caldigate is a reprobate for whom eternal damnation awaits. She further believes that one cannot change, an attitude which she ultimately rejects and one which would have made the work of Christianising missions invalid. Trollope's concern is that she will be seen as a ludicrous evangelical and the narrator repeatedly reminds viewers to respect her.<sup>112</sup> N. J. Hall has suggested that Mrs. Bolton is one of Trollope's most frightening characters, 'half-mad in her religious vigour and jealousy of her daughter's lover'.<sup>113</sup> It has been argued that for her personal triumph is more important than maternal love.<sup>114</sup> It is her love for her daughter that partially redeems her. Mrs. Bolton is prepared to face ridicule (by locking her daughter in the house and preventing her from living with her husband) so that her daughter may be saved. This is a similar fervour to that which inspired many of the evangelical missionaries.

In *Rachel Ray* (1863), the Rev. Prong and Mrs. Prime are evangelicals who are portrayed as sanctimonious prigs. That the Rev. Prong had been educated at Islington, possibly a snide reference to the Church Missionary Society's training institution there, was to condemn him. Mrs. Prime's oppressive religion makes her object to her sister's lover who is in every way suitable, except that he is a man and a lover. Furthermore he is invited to call whenever he likes, so compromising the sister's reputation. Trollope remarks that Mrs. Prime's motive is love of power rather than the need to save her sister's soul. Trollope also managed to criticise the Dorcas sewing parties which were a sine qua non for evangelical women and were often started by missionary wives in West Africa. Trollope writes that Mrs. Prime had taught herself

<sup>111</sup> Bradford Booth, *Anthony Trollope: Aspects of his Life and Art* (London: Allen Edward Hulton, 1958), p. 31.

<sup>112</sup> Jane Nardin, *Trollope and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1996), p. 84.

<sup>113</sup> N. John Hall, *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1991), p. 156.

<sup>114</sup> R. C. Terry, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 60.

to believe that cheerfulness was a sin and that the more she became morose the nearer she would be to achieving future happiness. He comments that 'In all her words and thoughts she was genuine but, then in so many of them, she was mistaken!'<sup>115</sup> The contemporary reviewers seem to have been little interested in Trollope's criticisms of evangelicalism although they were mostly complimentary about his portrayal of women. George Eliot praised the skill with which Trollope had organised everyday incidents into 'a strictly related well-proportioned whole'.<sup>116</sup> Trollope's criticisms of the evangelical movement appears not to have upset anyone, possibly as the movement was at its strongest in the 1850s and then began to decline as the Oxford Movement gained influence.

Charlotte Yonge was a prolific writer who was immensely popular and who is remembered today especially for her novels *The Heir of Redclyffe* and *The Daisy Chain*. By the end of her life she was less popular and by 1900 it has been said that nearly all the ladies who read her had silver in their hair.<sup>117</sup> Even in her day she attracted strong criticism e.g. in *Household Words*, her 'Pusey-stricken fantasies' were condemned.<sup>118</sup> Towards the end of her life, her Tractarian views became increasingly unpopular. She edited *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Members of the English Church* from 1851-93. Its circulation was small, never more than 1500. A typical issue for July 1866 included cameos from English history, some early Scandinavian history, a description of the International Horticultural Exhibition of 1866, a story by herself, an article 'Glimpses of French life in the 15th century' and practical readings on the Apostles Creed, a welcome change perhaps from the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress. Alethea Hayter has suggested that the magazine was carefully tailored for a particular class of readers who could in turn spread Tractarian principles into society.<sup>119</sup> Yonge also helped to produce a missionary periodical *The Net Cast Among Many Waters*. This concentrated on particular geographical areas including the Pongas Mission in Sierra Leone. There was more emphasis on letters from women

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<sup>115</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Rachel Ray* (London: Trollope Society, 1990), Ch. I.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. xvii.

<sup>117</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church Part Two 1860-1901* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p. 215.

<sup>118</sup> Alethea Hayter, *Charlotte Yonge* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1996), p. 54.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

and articles about women than in the missionary magazines produced by the various missionary societies, that is excluding those produced by the various women's missionary societies.

Charlotte Yonge gave most of her considerable earnings from books to charitable causes, including the founding of Anglican sisterhoods. Although deeply interested in missionary work for the urban poor at home, she was a strong supporter of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the Universities Missions to Central Africa and the Melanesian Mission to the Pacific. She wrote a full length biography of John Patteson, a relation, who was the martyred missionary bishop of the Melanesian Islands. She saw missionaries as the essence of chivalry and romance and depicted them as the height of glamour, even in death.<sup>120</sup> She was innovative in that she introduced missionaries as heroes in her writing and she portrayed the missionary not as a figure of contempt or symbol of harsh intolerance but as a romantic hero.<sup>121</sup>

Charlotte Yonge wrote a number of novels in which women feature as missionaries or as accompanying missionaries to their station. Angela Underwood features in *The Pillars of the House* (1873), *The Long Vacation* (1898) and *Modern Broods* (1900). She is the daughter of a deceased clergyman, one of thirteen children. She has a difficult childhood but is fairly consistent from an early age in setting her sights on entering a sisterhood. This is prefigured in that she is often called by the shortened form of her name 'Angel'. In later years she runs the extremes of religion, being attracted to the Salvation Army and then to marrying a Catholic count. She eventually trains as a nurse and then goes to Australia where she founds an Anglican nursing sisterhood. Here she works among the Australian aboriginals where she is described as being an admirable nurse and '... so useful among the Australian black women ... no one ever managed these very queer gins so well.'<sup>122</sup> 'Gins' is presumably an abbreviation of aboriginals. Although Angela returns safely to England, she seems to have hankerings for a martyr's death when she sings:

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>121</sup> Barbara Dennis, *Charlotte Yonge 1823-1901 Novelist of the Oxford Movement* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), p. 90.

<sup>122</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Modern Broods* (London: MacMillan, 1900), Ch XXI.



His sister she went beyond the seas  
And died an old maid among the black savages<sup>123</sup>

‘His sister’ refers to Angela herself.

*New Ground* (1868) is a novel about a missionary family in South Africa, including the missionary’s two orphaned sisters. It is more interesting for revealing missionary attitudes rather than specifically dealing with women’s role in the work. One sister is reluctant to go because ‘I don’t like horrid black people’. The locals in Natal are not keen on missionaries because of their feeling that they spoil the servants. Yonge’s novel stresses the importance of accustoming the Kaffirs to wear clothes which was seen as one great step towards civilizing and Christianizing them. Almost all missionaries until the beginning of the 20th century saw clothing as an essential part of the missionary process.

One of C. Yonge’s last books is *The Making of a Missionary* (1900) which was published by the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, founded in 1811. The Society controlled Church of England schools. Early on in the book there is a magic lantern show of missionary scenes, including a woman missionary saving a baby about to be burnt alive. Such shows were put on by missionaries on leave to raise funds and to keep up the interest in missionary work. They would have been used to giving magic lantern shows at their mission stations abroad. The hero of the book, Edward, attends a course of lectures on missionaries where his female friends, who also attend, express surprise that women can be missionaries, although all the women mentioned in the lectures are wives. By 1900 a high proportion of missionaries were single women (see Chapter I) and perhaps Charlotte Yonge wanted to publicise the growing role of single women in missionary work, although she said ‘I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of women’.<sup>124</sup> She did not explain this view further but she was strongly influenced by the male figures in her life, for example her father and John

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 223.

<sup>124</sup> Alethea Hayter, op. cit., p. 57.

Keble, and this can be seen as acceptance of male authority. In the book she also raises the question of whether the call to mission work is genuine or only an interest in adventure. The answer was probably that missions combined duty with adventure, a highly attractive combination for some .

Edward trains at St. Augustine's College in Canterbury which opened in 1849 for those who subscribed to the Oxford Movement. He is advised not to think about marriage until after he has trained since he will occupy a higher station in life after his training. In contrast, his potential wife would have stayed at home and had no opportunities to improve herself. This was a policy strictly adhered by the Basel Mission Society and slightly less so by the CMS. Edward's mother, a widow, remarries and there is regret in the novel that she decided to opt for earthly love rather than accompanying her son abroad, reflecting to some extent the choice which faced Jane Eyre. Yonge also raises the question of missionaries having a high standard of living although the contrary view is also expressed in the book that it is a poor thing to be a missionary wife.<sup>125</sup> Edward marries and his wife's sister asks to go to China with them. The sister, Mabel, is an accredited teacher for the SPG and Women's Mission Association. In a repeat almost of the first scene at the magic lantern show, Mabel rescues a Chinese baby girl. She is then killed in and wears 'the Crown of Martyrdom', a heroine for the missionary cause. The peasant uprising, known as the Boxer rebellion, occurred in the summer of 1900 so Yonge was being very topical, although there had been a long history of unrest and xenophobia in the region. Some 180 missionaries and their families were killed in the Boxer rebellion, many of whom had been sent by the China Inland Mission to remote parts of the country and so were very vulnerable. A massacre of six female CMS missionaries took place at Ku-cheng in 1895 so it is possibly more likely that this prompted Charlotte Yonge to include the murder of Mabel.<sup>126</sup> Judith Rowbotham has suggested that the death of the female missionaries meant that the missionary establishment had to come to terms with the

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<sup>125</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The Making of a Missionary* (London: National Society, 1900), p. 170 & p. 174.

<sup>126</sup> Augustus Robert Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

fact that martyrdom was not restricted by femininity and that this had implications for the acceptance of a wider feminine potential.<sup>127</sup>

Charlotte Yonge's books reflect the passionate interest of the early Tractarians in education and church building, urban and overseas missions, the temperance movement, nursing and youth work.<sup>128</sup> Dull lives found excitement in what was seen as helping the poor. Yonge herself belonged to the Anglican sisterhood of St. Mary The Virgin at Wantage, although this presumably just meant she helped them financially. As described by Margaret More and Alicia Percival in *Victorian Bestseller*, Yonge's greatest enthusiasm was for foreign missions - 'For, to her, missions represented one of the few romantic patches in a drab modern world, and those engaged in them were the inheritors of the crusading spirit'.<sup>129</sup>

Mostly missionaries did not write fiction. Their position in the missionary society and their time spent in distant parts of the Empire militated against this although male missionaries, at least, were required to keep journals and to write regular reports. For female missionaries the position was even more difficult since being a female missionary or a missionary wife meant giving one's all to the cause, even if women like Mrs. Gaskell and Harriet Beecher Stowe could produce novels whilst being married to a minister of religion. Charlotte Maria Tucker was an exception in that whilst a missionary in India she wrote eleven books plus some twenty booklets translated into the Indian languages. She had over 140 published works but the bulk of her writing was done before she went to India at the age of 54 with the CEZMS as an honorary missionary i.e. without pay, where she served for 18 years.<sup>130</sup> Adeline Sergeant whose father was a missionary in Jamaica but had returned to England before her birth on the grounds of ill-health wrote 75 novels but so far as is known none of them particularly concerned missions.<sup>131</sup> Anna Hinderer's memoirs *Seventeen Years*

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<sup>127</sup> Judith Rowbotham, '“Soldiers of Christ?”: images of female missionaries in late nineteenth-century Britain: Issues of heroism and martyrdom' *Gender and History*, 12 (2000), 82-106 (p. 101-2).

<sup>128</sup> Mary Shakeshaft, *Missions and Charities in the Novels of Charlotte Mary Yonge* (Unpublished Manuscript), p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Margaret Laura Mare & Alicia C. Percival, *Victorian Best-Seller: The World of Charlotte M. Yonge* (London: Harrap, 1948), p. 150.

<sup>130</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (London: Virago, 1978), p. 328.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* p. 338.

*in the Yoruba Country* where she was a missionary wife are discussed elsewhere (see Chapter III) but this was compiled by friends after her death from her journals and letters rather than by Mrs. Hinderer herself. Some missionary wives wrote travel books, for example Annie B. Hore with *To Lake Tanganyika in a Bath Chair* (1886).

The five authors discussed in detail have widely differing attitudes towards missionary and evangelical women in their novels. These range from outright criticism in the case of Herman Melville to enthusiastic support by Charlotte Yonge. Two of the writers, Dickens and Trollope, use satire to criticise evangelical women. Barbara Dennis has suggested that for a topic to become the subject of a parody suggests that it had become part of public consciousness.<sup>132</sup> Women's involvement in religion was not questioned but extending their role in missions, not as wives but as independent operators, was more contentious. Without the protection of husbands, women might gravitate towards the type of missionary involvement seen as unsuitable e.g. racial contacts and political contacts. Dickens' handling of Mrs. Jellyby reveals some of these fears. She had a husband but it is clear that he did not count for much. Criticisms of evangelicals were intended to reveal their cant and hypocrisy and women were an almost defenceless whipping boy for this purpose. Their role was to inspire rather than to perform. It is difficult to assess how significant is the fact that it is the two female authors who have supported the concept of the missionary heroine sacrificing her life for the missionary cause. Trollope's Mary Gresley also sacrifices her life as a missionary wife in Africa. The reader is made to feel that this is a poor thing compared with what she might have achieved as an author. The five authors, covering between them almost the entire 19th century, show that missions and the role that women could play were very much under discussion. The novels mirror the developments discussed elsewhere in this thesis of how initially it was missionary wives who provided the female input for missionaries, then the growing interest of women in the administration of missionary work and eventually the role of the single female missionary.

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<sup>132</sup> Barbara Dennis, *Charlotte Yonge 1823-1901 Novelist of the Oxford Movement* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), p. 99.

#### IV Conclusions

Patriotism warmed in response to the idea of Christian sacrifice and service, so inextricably bound up in missionary work.<sup>133</sup> The missionary heroine was part of a wider adulation of heroines such as Florence Nightingale and Grace Darling who caught the public's imagination. Heroines provided exemplars from which it could be argued that what some women had achieved others could as well if given the opportunity.<sup>134</sup> 19th century readers liked heroines but they had to be on their own terms. Preferably they had to be young and preferably they had to achieve something heroic. But the definition of heroic became hijacked by those who had an interest in creating heroines. If a heroine could do nothing else then she could at least die for the cause. The missionary societies were able to play on this, in some cases making heroines - an example is Annie Walsh - of those whose lives were perfectly ordinary. The missionary societies faced a quandary over how to justify the deaths of so many of their missionaries, particularly in West Africa. If death made heroes or heroines of them, then death was acceptable and could be used to further the missionary cause. An heroic death became an example for others to follow. Martyrdom served to swell the ranks of the missionary recruits. Even in death there was a useful role to play. The function of the missionary heroine was to justify and inspire. The missionary societies emphasised the role of the heroine frequently so they must have felt that they were successful in promoting the idea of death. The idea of a heroine was promoted so that she could be involved in activities and difficulties which would have otherwise been unacceptable. She acquired a halo which put her above the restrictions on women's activities at home because they were intimately bound up with the idea of self-sacrifice. As it became safer for missionaries to work overseas in terms both of the medicine available and the spread of pax Britannica, that is in the first quarter of the 20th century, the idea of the missionary heroine changed. Hugh Stutfield writing for *Blackwoods Magazine* in the 1890s, observed that as an ideal of feminine behaviour, 'self-sacrifice is out of fashion altogether in our modern school of

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<sup>133</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 83.

<sup>134</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women's History' in Transition: The European Case', *Feminist Studies*, 3:3/4 (1976), 83-103 (p. 83).

novelists, and self-development has taken its place'.<sup>135</sup> She no longer had to die but she had to show a superhuman effort in her work and be successful in spite of all the difficulties. She remained someone special, someone who was quite apart from the ordinary run. The missionary societies did not invent the missionary heroine - there was no need since it was obvious that many women were dying for the missionary cause but they improved and embellished her and used her.

The 19th century authors whose work has been discussed took differing attitudes towards missionary work by women and did not always collude in the idea of the missionary heroine. *Jane Eyre* possibly follows most closely the example of the sacrifice made by the missionary heroine and can be seen as attempting to bring together the myth and the 'factual'. Even in this instance, the heroine rejects the idea of heroic sacrifice for the more earthly pleasure of marriage to a man whom she loves. Nevertheless the image of the missionary wife in *Jane Eyre* reinforces the missionary ideal of a woman sacrificing her life for the work of God. Other authors were not so sympathetic and their views range from the outright criticism of missionary wives in Herman Melville's novels to the satire in Dickens' *Bleak House*. These authors were using missionary activities to make comments on contemporary society - on its cant and the colonial governments' practices, for example. They sought to present the alternative view to that of the missionary societies. Their readers, who would have included many evangelicals, seemed not to have been put out by these criticisms. They kept their views separately from what they read in novels and, after all, felt they really knew what missionary heroines achieved.

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<sup>135</sup> Kimberly Reynolds & Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 32.

## Chapter VI

### The Silent Sisters - Missionary Encounters with West African Women

‘Woman is the lever, the only infallible lever, whereby sunken nations are  
upraised’<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Introduction

Missionaries were ambivalent in their attitudes towards West African women. The quotation above was taken from a book published in 1909 about India. The sentiment, however, was one to which many African missionaries might have subscribed, since Africa was seen as the dark continent to which they were bringing light. Some were less certain. One missionary wife, writing just before W.W.I about East Africa, suggested that ‘Females of savage tribes are harder to reach in their adamantine barbarism than the men, being more conservative in preserving their heathenish customs’.<sup>2</sup> The various rituals and customs practised by women, particularly those associated with fertility and puberty, about which the missionaries seldom had first-hand knowledge but which influenced their thinking, would have reinforced this view. Where there was common ground among missionaries was on the need to elevate West African women to what was believed to be a higher status. This has been described as the need for the African woman ‘... to be reshaped as well as reclothed.’ on becoming a Christian.<sup>3</sup> This was because, as wives and mothers, they were seen as playing an important role in the development of Christianity. Thus it was necessary to ensure that West African women were educated to what was seen as an appropriate standard, even though it often proved difficult to get girls to come to school. Women’s affiliation to Christianity was reinforced through their involvement in church organisations such as Dorcas groups and Bible reading groups. At the beginning of the 20th century tentative steps were being taken towards setting up a Christian women’s movement in what was to become Nigeria. Although in the minority, in the Methodist churches women could also become class leaders, in the

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Helen Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (London: Blackwood, 1909), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Watt, *In the Heart of Savagedom* (London: Marshall Bros, 1912), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Hastings, ‘Were Women a Special Case’, in *Women and Missions: Past and Present* ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, & Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 109-125 (p. 115).



churches of the Basel Mission deaconesses. Women provided a continuity in the church because, unlike men, they were not able move to other areas to seek employment. On occasions they were the inspiration for churches being started.

It has been suggested that the Christianity practised by the missionary societies discouraged women's development, for example, in opposing Igbo women's participation in the politically important female associations and limiting their education to the Bible and learning European domestic skills.<sup>4</sup> The limited education may be more a reflection of the scarce resources available to the missionary societies in that part of West Africa rather than a conscious policy on their part to restrict women's education, since they established a number of girls' secondary schools (see Chapter IV on the Annie Walsh Memorial School, for example). The importance of education in West Africa is such that access may be considered to be the most single important asset available to a girl.<sup>5</sup> Education can also be seen as 'a most effective means of exercising social control, of shaping the citizens as the system wishes them to be.'<sup>6</sup> The missionaries would have been well aware of this.

Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, West African women began to have a voice. Some were the educated wives of the African clergy in the higher ranks of the missionary societies. They were in a position to express their views and a small number did so. Other women became teachers, both at primary and secondary level, in missionary schools and this gave them an increased status. For some women the acceptance of Christianity proved a mixed blessing, particularly so where they came from the ruling families and there was opposition from their relations to joining a church. Although African traditional religion reaffirmed the subordination of female to male, the separation of spheres of activity within it enabled women to exercise authoritative roles among members of their own

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<sup>4</sup> Nancy F. Hafkin & Edna G. Bay, 'Introduction' in *Women in Africa* ed. by Nancy F. Hafkin & Edna G. Bay (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), pp. 1-18 (p. 11).

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Callaway & Lucy Creevy, *The Heritage of Islam: Women, Religion and Politics in West Africa* (Boulder & London, Lynne Rienner Publications, 1994), p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Caseley Hayford 1868-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), p. 11.

sex.<sup>7</sup> Since most converts were from the traditional African religions (there were few converts from Islam), most women largely gave up this role on accepting Christianity.

This chapter looks at the interaction between missionaries, both male and female, and West African women. Recent comment has suggested that the relations between missionaries and indigenous people were more evenly balanced than has been realised.<sup>8</sup> So far as West African women were concerned, they were able on occasions to manipulate the missionaries. Although 'Patriarchal Christianity wrapped up in a highly legalistic and authoritarian form ... seemed none too liberating',<sup>9</sup> women were at times able to use it to their advantage. The mission stations frequently served as a refuge for the oppressed and these were often women, those who were being forced into marriage or perhaps were to be sacrificed on the death of a husband. The traditional view has been that Western influence has emancipated African women in a number of ways, for example, the suppression of 'barbarous practices' such as ostracism of mothers of twins, the opening of schools and the introduction of modern medicine.<sup>10</sup> Missionaries were an important part of this process. Oduyoye, however, has suggested that it is a myth put about in Christian circles that the church brought liberation to the African woman.<sup>11</sup> Oduyoye, a committed Christian, may be thinking here in terms of the workload which the African woman still had to carry since she suggests that Christianity converted the African people to a new religion without converting their culture.<sup>12</sup>

The role of West African women in the economic life of the area has been well documented. Samuel Crowther, writing about the Niger expedition of 1857-1859, commented that Nupe women were active traders in produce, for example, yams, corn

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<sup>7</sup> Marion Kilson, 'Women in African Traditional Religions', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 8 (1976), 133-143 (p. 140).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Brock, 'Mission Encounters in the Colonial World' *Journal of Religious History*, 24:2 (2000), 159-179 (p. 159).

<sup>9</sup> Adrian Hastings, *op. cit.*, (p. 123).

<sup>10</sup> Judith Van Allen, 'Aba Riots' or Igbo 'Women's War? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women' in *Women in Africa* ed. by Nancy F. Hafkin & Edna G. Bay, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), pp. 59-86 (p. 62).

<sup>11</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p.172.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p.176.

and beans and said that 'The female population may be said to be the life of trade in this country'. 'They are chief carriers of loads, grinders of corn.'<sup>13</sup> In 1911 seventy-five per cent of 4,000 women in the Accra district were traders.<sup>14</sup> A female traveller wrote '... whenever I think of thoroughly independent, well-to-do women, I think of those women in the gold-mining centre of West Africa.'<sup>15</sup> Such trading, however, was not a role which found favour with the missionaries, even though it enabled women to present gifts to the churches, in some cases substantial ones. It was seen as distracting women from their household tasks, especially the care of their children. It gave them an economic self sufficiency which, in turn, could lead to a more independent lifestyle than the missionaries liked, although their chief argument was that the life as a trader coarsened women. African women were meant to imitate the virtues of the female missionary although they may also have taken on her vices, for example in adopting an attitude of superiority towards their unconverted compatriots. It has been suggested that the Victorian woman's mind set led them to see local women not as equals but as unfortunates in need of saving. Furthermore 'Feminism and female reform ideology dictated the existence of dependent clients on whom to confer aid, comfort and the status of having been saved.'<sup>16</sup>

Although the usually accepted view is that African women were ignored by the colonial authorities and thereby lost influence with the coming of colonialism, it has been argued that in some areas of West Africa women remained central to society, for example Yoruba women. Rajii has suggested that in several Yoruba towns there were women officials headed by a woman, the Iyalode, who settled disputes, presumably among women, particularly market traders.<sup>17</sup> Women were also influential in state affairs. Nevertheless such influence was limited to a few women, such as the wives of rulers, whereas Christianity seemingly gave all its converts a special significance

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Crowther & John Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the River Niger* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968), p. 204.

<sup>14</sup> Claire Robertson, 'Ga Women and Socioeconomic Change in Accra, Ghana' in *Women in Africa* ed. by Nancy F. Hafkin & Edna G. Bay (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), pp. 101-118 (p. 115).

<sup>15</sup> Mary Gaunt, *Alone in West Africa* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), p. 324.

<sup>16</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the Indian Woman, 1865-1915', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13 (4) (1990), 295-308 (pp. 295/6).

<sup>17</sup> Adesina Yusef Raji, 'Women in Pre-Colonial Yorubaland, West Africa', *Africa Update*, 5:2 (1998), 2-6 (p. 2).

within the church. Okonjo has commented on the missionaries' condemnation of the system of giving titles to Igbo women, which were seen as heathen-like and anti-Christian. The titles were intended to reflect their wealth and influence in society.<sup>18</sup> Instead the missionaries substituted marriage with the title 'Mississi'.

The missionary societies had strong views on two subjects which affected West African women particularly, that is domestic slavery and polygyny. Women were adversely affected by these two issues. They found it less easy to obtain their liberation from slavery either by purchasing their freedom or by running away. Any lone woman with children in areas where domestic slavery was prevalent was immediately suspect and in any case risked danger through being on her own. Slave-owners were often less willing to emancipate women for the reason that they were less likely to run away with the result that they had to pay more for their freedom.<sup>19</sup> The missionary societies' requirement that polygynous men had to give up all but one wife if they were to be accepted as members of the church was potentially disastrous for those wives who were to be cast-off unless adequate provision was made to support them. Polygyny was associated with Islam and this made the practice even more unacceptable to missionaries. In monogamous marriages the church helped to reconcile the differences between husband and wife, often ensuring that, where the marriage did irretrievably break down, the husband made provision for his wife.

It is not difficult to see that 19th century missionaries could have problems in their encounters with West African women. The bare chested women who sang and danced - and any type of dancing was antithetical to the Wesleyan Methodists - in the Gold Coast were seen as depraved. One of the missionaries' first tasks was to clothe them. In Sierra Leone the description of girls dancing would have confirmed the missionaries' worst fears of the depravity of the women there. 'The maiden glides within the circle of her singing and hand-clapping friends, scarcely moving her feet,

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<sup>18</sup> I. K. Okonjo, 'The Role of Women in Social Change Among the Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria Living West of the River Niger' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 1976), p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> Robin Law, 'Legitimate trade and gender relations in Yorubaland and Dahomey', in *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce* ed. by Robin Law (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 195-214 (p. 207).

but at every beat of the time, jerking up the hip.<sup>20</sup> The girls were taught erotic dances which were believed to make them attractive to men.<sup>21</sup> The portrait in Appendix VI, Figure 8, drawn by Archdeacon Crowther of the Niger Delta Pastorate, (himself an African so presumably the portrait is sympathetically drawn) gives an idea of what the missionaries would have encountered. This would have been somewhat different from the photographs of fully clothed African women which they would have seen in the missionary magazines. Initiation rites, too, were an important part of a girls' upbringing which did not find favour with the missionaries. It has been argued that the ceremonies instilled an attitude of submission to men.<sup>22</sup> Thus their abandonment or their decline into a form of ritual might be seen as giving women greater freedom. It has also been suggested that some girls became Christian because they found a Christian regime easier than participating in local religions where there were innumerable social and family obligations such as taking part in girls' dances, paying visits at the proper times and helping to cook at festivities.<sup>23</sup>

Almost without exception, the missionary societies did not approve of their missionaries marrying African women. In part this reflected the problem of how they were to be treated. Were they to be accepted as a missionary wife or were they to be given the same status as the wife of an African minister. In the event few missionaries attempted to challenge the rule on marrying African women. Most societies retained the right to vet future wives so any marriages with African women had to be done without consulting them. Those men who did marry local women were for the most part assured of their position within the society and so unlikely to be dismissed. Because of their position they could see that their wives were accepted within missionary circles in West Africa, even if they were not permitted to come to Europe during their husband's home leave. The numbers marrying were not significant enough to encourage African women to think that such a prospect was likely except in the most exceptional cases. There was always the possibility that the

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<sup>20</sup> F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave. A Visit to Sierra Leone in 1834* (London: Richard Bentley, 1836), p. 285.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155.

<sup>23</sup> Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939), p. 296.

husband might be forced to resign. Where the missionary was married to an African, it has been suggested that this would inevitably affect the status of other African women favourably.<sup>24</sup>

There has been increasing interest in the interaction between missionary societies and women in the nineteenth century, extending much wider than just West Africa. Grimshaw (1983) has looked at missionary attitudes towards women in Hawaii. Perhaps not surprisingly the missionaries there believed that the local women took insufficient care of their children and the missionary women deprecated the open sexuality of Hawaiian women.<sup>25</sup> Missionaries throughout the world, it seemed, faced with the different conventions of an alien society, failed to try to understand how that society worked and fell back on criticisms which they knew would find a receptive audience at home.

Research into the contribution by Africans to the development of missionary work has, inevitably, concentrated on what men did. They were the local pastors and therefore fairly well documented, at least compared with women. Okeke (1977) has reassessed the work of the CMS in Igboland and has mostly followed this route.<sup>26</sup> Achebe (2002) has looked at religion and politics in Igboland from the 18th century to 1930 so covering the Aba women's movement in 1929. On the whole, however, his research, intentionally so, is dominated by men.<sup>27</sup> Oduyoye has written about 'women in the mission'.<sup>28</sup> This contains useful information about how African women were affected although much of it relates to post W.W.I. Hastings has looked at the issue of whether women were a special case for the missionary societies and has concluded they were not.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless there is much useful information in his work about

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<sup>24</sup> Adrian Hastings, op. cit., (p. 111).

<sup>25</sup> P. Grimshaw, 'Christian Woman, Pious Wife, Faithful Mother, Devoted Missionary: Conflicts in the Role of American Missionary Women in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii', *Feminist Studies*, 9:3 (1983), 489-514 (pp. 499-500).

<sup>26</sup> D. C. Okeke, 'Policy and Practice of the Church Missionary Society in Igboland, 1857-1929' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> Ike Achebe, 'Religion and Politics in Igboland from the 18th Century to 1930: Earth, God and Power', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Leadership Development in the Methodist Church Nigeria* (Lagos: Sefer Books, 1992), pp. 69-88.

<sup>29</sup> Adrian Hastings, op. cit., pp. 109-125.

women and missions for the whole of Africa (except the north), covering both the 19th and 20th centuries so there is less detail about West African women. Hugon has looked at the effect of Methodist missionaries on Gold Coast women in the 19th century.<sup>30</sup> She has concluded that, in relegating them to domestic and family tasks, the missionaries were taking away from the women their economic independence and reinforcing their subjection to their husbands.<sup>31</sup> Edet has taken a similar viewpoint, suggesting that Christianity legalises the oppression of women and their subjugation to men.<sup>32</sup> Van Allan has suggested that British colonial officers and missionaries, both men and women, generally failed to see the political roles and political power of Igbo women, as evidenced by *mikiri* or meetings where an important function was to regulate trading.<sup>33</sup>

There has been a growing interest by scholars in researching into the lives of African women. Some of this is relevant to West Africa and the relations between missionaries and women. Some of the research has attempted to show that women were not just the passive underdogs in society but were active participants in society. This is particularly the case in areas of special responsibility to them such as farming, female rites of passage and childbirth.<sup>34</sup> Some of these traditional roles were not acceptable within Christianity and the women were required to relinquish them when converting. Stolltje has looked at the role of the Asante Queen Mother in the Gold Coast.<sup>35</sup> She performed important rituals, settled disputes between women and proposed the new chief, subject to consultation. Every village had its chief and Queen Mother. Henderson mentions the role of the Omu in Onitsha where she was

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<sup>30</sup> Anne Hugon, 'La contradiction missionnaire. Discours et pratique des missionnaires Methodists a l'egard des femmes africains de Cote de l'Or (1835-1874)', *Clio*, 6 (1997), pp. 15-34.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. pp. 31-2.

<sup>32</sup> Rosemary N. Edet, 'Christianity and African Women's Rituals', in *The Will to Arise: Women, Traditions and the Church in Africa* ed. by Mercy Amba Oduyoye & R. A. Musimbi Kanyoro, (New York: 1992 Orbis Books), pp. 25-39 (p. 35).

<sup>33</sup> Judith Van Allan, "'Sitting on a Man" Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 6:2 (1972), 65-181 (p. 169).

<sup>34</sup> Margaret Jean Hay & Sharon Stichter, eds, *African Women South of the Sahara* (London: Longman, 1984), p. XV.

<sup>35</sup> B. J. Stolltje, 'Asante Queen Mother: A Study in Female Authority', in *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses and Power. Case Studies in African Gender* ed. by Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan, (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1997), pp. 43-57.



crowned and had royal regalia.<sup>36</sup> She drew her wealth from control over the market places. Omu Nwagbaka (1884-6) was influential in getting women to attend the CMS missions.<sup>37</sup> In Ibadan, the title of Iyalode was introduced in the 1850s and the holders of the title played an important role in the affairs of the town, although women were generally under represented in the political process.<sup>38</sup> The holders of the title were subordinate to the ruler of Ibadan and were expected to support him. Those who refused to do so were relieved of their title and expected to commit suicide.<sup>39</sup> The role of influential women, whether in their own right or as wives of chiefs, in influencing women to convert, is an interesting one. The missionary societies did not attempt to concentrate their efforts in this direction in the hope that the conversion of an influential woman would lead others to follow. Van Allen has suggested that the dominant view among both British colonial officers and missionaries was that women were not seen as part of the political process.<sup>40</sup> Their views about the correct role of women in society supported this, confirming their belief in the role of women as wives and mothers and, in the view of some, educating them accordingly. Coquery-Vidrovitch, for example, has suggested that missionaries emphasised women in the role of mother, responsible for the care of the household and leaving it only for matters connected with the church.<sup>41</sup>

There have been some attempts to recuperate the lives of some of the West African women of the 19th and early 20th centuries who were associated in one way or another with the missionary societies. There has been a considerable amount of work on Sarah Forbes Bonetta, the Dahomian orphan, with whom Queen Victoria became concerned and who was educated at the CMS Annie Walsh Memorial School in Sierra Leone. Sarah is discussed in Chapter I. Adelaide Smith (1868-1960), married to

<sup>36</sup> H. K. Henderson, 'Onitsha Women: The Traditional Context for Political Power', in *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses and Power Case Studies in African Gender* ed. by Flora Edouyawe S.Kaplan, (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1997), pp. 218-225 (p. 219).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. (p. 225).

<sup>38</sup> Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria* (Berkeley, Institute of International Affairs, University of California, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> B. Awe, *Nigerian Women in Perspective* (Lagos: Sankore Publishers, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Judith Van Allen, 'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 6:2 (1972), 65-181 (pp. 165-6).

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 75.

Joseph Caseley Hayford, a West African lawyer, taught at the Annie Walsh School briefly.<sup>42</sup> She became active in community affairs and in 1915 gave an address at the Wesleyan Church, Freetown on 'The Rights of Women and Christian Marriage'. She can be seen as an early West African feminist who sought to express her views, initially at least, through the church.

The advent of missionaries affected African women in a variety of ways with a variety of outcomes. These are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow where considerable attention is given to the two issues which affected women most closely, namely polygyny and domestic slavery.

## II Missionary Influence or Missionaries Influenced?

Missionaries were in the business of changing the society they encountered in West Africa. Many of the ways they went about this directly affected African women, from providing education and medical help to clothing and employing them. It has been suggested that the priorities as seen by Africans were (in order of preference) vocational education, general education, medical service, religious change and, societal and ethical change.<sup>43</sup> Missionary priorities would have given first place to religious change from which they expected most of the other changes to come about as a consequence of conversion. This section looks in a little more detail at some of the issues involved and also attempts to see how African women reacted.

Both men and women could find that they encountered, at the very least, hostility from their compatriots when they converted to Christianity. Women had to overcome the additional hurdle of getting their husbands' and relatives' consent which was not always readily forthcoming. Their reluctance to give agreement can be seen as a factor in the decision of some who were highly sympathetic towards Christianity but never converted. Mary Slessor in Old Calabar benefited considerably from the friendship of Ma Eme, the sister of Chief Edem of Ekenge, the village where she was

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<sup>42</sup> Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Caseley Hayford 1868-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria 1846-1960* (London: Brill, 1986), p. 133.

based for a while.<sup>44</sup> However, Ma Eme, perhaps under her brother's influence, never converted. Others found the community elders were hostile because Christianity upset traditional ways of doing things. In the notebook kept by James Birikorang, an African minister in the Gold Coast, he records that the elders had prohibited the Christian wife of the Amanhene, the local ruler, from attending church.<sup>45</sup> The problem seems to have been that men and women mingled together after the church service, although this may just have been put forward as a means of preventing the wife's attendance at church.

Christianity could also involve a loss of status for women and worse. The case of the Queen Mother in the small kingdom of Akropong in the Gold Coast in the early 20th century is a case in point.<sup>46</sup> Although the real power lay with the king, the Queen Mother was important in legitimising the new king. She was in fact neither a queen nor a ruler but the senior member of the royal family. She was important because the Akropong kingdom was matrilineal so a king's children did not succeed him and therefore the line of succession was unclear. In the case in question there were two rival claimants for the throne so the Queen Mother was in a position of influence. In this instance she was the wife of a local minister of the Basel Mission and also a deaconess. As a Christian she refused to perform the customary ceremonies which included ghost and fetish worship. These were necessary to endorse the new king, who apparently, was always a non-Christian. The Queen Mother resigned her post rather than perform the ceremonies, giving up a position of considerable authority within the local community.

In 1878 a cousin of the King of Akim, Gold Coast, converted to Christianity as her husband had already done.<sup>47</sup> She received visits from all the elders to get her to change her mind. The king taunted her, saying 'A princess had gone down the hill -

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<sup>44</sup> Carol Christian & Gladys Plummer, *God and One Redhead: Mary Slessor of Calabar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> PRAAD (Public Records & Archives Administration Department, Accra) Papers EC1/78 Presbyterian Church Papers, Kibi, Gold Coast.

<sup>46</sup> Michelle Gilbert, 'The Cimmerian Darkness of Intrigue: Queen Mother, Christianity and Truth in Akuapem History' *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1993), 2-43.

<sup>47</sup> Basel Mission Archives English Transcriptions of Documents Reel 130 p. 592.

she wants to become a Christian and join the people who used to be slaves.’

Apparently she responded by referring to Queen Victoria. Of a more serious nature was the threat to deprive her of her property left to her by her mother. In the event she was expelled from the royal family. The Basel missionary’s report comments that this type of persecution was common, although it is not clear whether he was just referring to women.

The rules of the Basel Mission society prohibited interracial sexual contact and also marriage, although one of their missionaries, Johnannes Zimmermann, married a Jamaican (see Chapter III). A similar rule was followed by the other missionary societies in West Africa, if not so explicitly stated. Several early CMS missionaries married African women as their second wives (see Chapter III). This could perhaps be conveniently overlooked as the early missionaries, who were mostly German, were not expected to return home on leave and would have found it difficult to find brides. Thomas Birch Freeman who served the WMMS in the Gold Coast married three times. He was English with an English mother and an African father. His first wife was English, the daughter of an English minister, and died shortly after arriving in the Gold Coast in 1838. He married again in 1840 to an African woman who died in 1841. His third marriage was to Rebecca Morgan, described as an educated African woman.<sup>48</sup>

In 1899 the Women’s Department of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) asked all the female missionaries in the Niger Mission to reply to a questionnaire about women’s involvement in the Mission.<sup>49</sup> One commented that Ibo women were ‘lazy, unintelligent, fiery, untruthful and superstitious’. Missionary attitudes on race were also exemplified in the attempts by the CMS to recruit West Indians for missionary service in West Africa. Such a move was not without a precedent as a number of West Indians had come to Old Calabar with the Scottish Presbyterians when they started their work in 1846. Mary Slessor had an adopted West African daughter, Jeanie. The Basel Mission also employed Jamaican women as teachers. The CMS

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<sup>48</sup> Norman Birtwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman* (London: Corgate Allan Press, 1950), p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/3/O Replies from Niger Missions to Questions Raised by the Women’s Department of the Church Missionary Society 25 April 1899.

Sierra Leone Executive Committee felt that it would be possible for a West Indian woman to hold a position at the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone somewhere between that of the European teachers and that of the African teachers.<sup>50</sup> The Rev. Elwin, writing from Sierra Leone, was enthusiastic about the scheme and thought that, if the person was a quadroon, she would be good company for the European teachers. Apparently one woman, Sister Woodbine, had been sent from Jamaica to work at the Princess Christian Hospital in Sierra Leone, an institution closely associated with the CMS although not part of it. The Rev. Elwin considered that the European sister there had made a mistake in placing her on the same footing as herself. The scheme closed in 1912 and it seems fairly certain that no single women came from the West Indies to Sierra Leone. Mrs. Bill, wife of the head of the Qua Iboe Missionary Society wrote the first booklet issued by the Mission, entitled *From Darkness to Light: The Story of Etia*.<sup>51</sup> This was the story of the first Biblewoman of the Society. Mrs. Bill wrote of Etia 'To me she has been a true sister ...' although it is not known what this actually meant in day to day terms. Etia had sought the protection of the mission house after her second husband died and because earlier she had been accused of witchcraft, possibly because she had been skilled in the use of herbs and acted as a children's doctor. Others took this route when they were threatened.

What many sought from the missionaries was an education. For men this gave them access to employment, particularly in the government service. For women that option was very limited, for example to being a post mistress or a teacher so for the most part they were likely to be traders or seamstresses if they worked. Whilst the idea of working as a seamstress in the 19th century today carries overtones of exploitation, this opened up a new avenue of work for some West African women. It can be argued that through their insistence on women being clothed, the missionaries helped the new industry to develop. This replaced spinning which died out as imported cloth replaced hand-spun cotton. The numerous schools opened by the missionary societies also provided employment since, wherever possible the schools were segregated and

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<sup>50</sup> CMS Archives CY 1 Extract from Minutes of Sierra Leone Executive Committee 30 November 1900.

<sup>51</sup> Qua Iboe Mission Booklet No. 1 2nd Edition 1908.

women taught the girls. They mostly taught in primary schools and, given the training which the teachers received, the teaching would have been pretty basic.

The log book of the Christiansborg Presbyterian Middle Board School in the Gold Coast - all schools in West Africa as part of the Education Code of 1891 had to keep one - records frequent instances of girls not coming to school.<sup>52</sup> In the entry for the week of 8-12th August 1892 the teacher complains about the irregularity of the girls' attendance. In the entry of 16-20th August 1897 there were 46 girls on the register but only 29 attended. Sometimes the teachers were ill so the girls attended part-time only and on one occasion lessons were interrupted for two days so that the girls could carry stones for a new chapel. From time to time parents were questioned about the non-attendance at school of their daughter. Sometimes the reason was that she was needed at home. Some maintained that the education of girls was useless. In some instances the education of girls was limited to domestic science because it was felt that their future husbands would need to give permission for them to be taught reading and writing.

In 1861 the Rev. Hech of the Basel Mission wrote a report on the girls' school at Abokobi in the Gold Coast.<sup>53</sup> The girls got up at 6 a. m. and from then until 8 a. m. were involved in domestic chores plus learning a verse from the Bible. From 8-11 a. m. they had lessons, consisting of the three Rs, Biblical history, the catechism, learning verses from the Bible plus hymns and singing. In the afternoon they had sewing lessons for three hours where they made items to be sold. Supper was at 5 and evening prayers at 7. The photograph in Appendix VI, Figure 9 shows the girls and their European teacher in the very early 1900s.

This curriculum would have confirmed the comments by critics that the missionaries were providing a narrow education for the girls. Other critics have gone further and suggested that even the formal schooling that was given was not particularly useful, that women who traded acquired a facility in mental arithmetic which was not

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<sup>52</sup> PRAAD Log Book for the Christiansborg Presbyterian Middle Board School August 1892 to June 1901 EC7/18 and 19.

<sup>53</sup> PRAAD Abokobi and the Basel Mission EC.6.1.

noticeable in those girls who had learnt their arithmetic in the organised process of school education.<sup>54</sup> There were also those who criticised the schooling for being given predominantly in English. There were schools where girls received a wider curriculum but these were limited by funding and the availability of trained teachers, most of whom would have been European. In addition the schools had to get the approval of the colonial governments if they were to receive grants and this constrained what they could teach and the language of teaching. Missionaries were more concerned to cast their net wide than provide specialist education for a more limited number of girls. Nevertheless the syllabus for the Wesley Girls High School, Cape Castle, Gold Coast (for probably around 1900) covered the 3 Rs, English history, drawing, book-keeping, geography, grammar, singing, French and scripture plus needlework, cooking, PE, dressmaking and laundry work.<sup>55</sup> In addition the senior girls were prepared for the government teachers' examination. Women who received this education could use it how they thought fit, including becoming traders. For the most part missionaries could only hope to influence their charges not to trade. In the case of the wives of African ministers - themselves forbidden to trade - the missionaries could and did exercise some control. This may have caused hardship as some African ministers complained that their wives needed to trade in order to supplement the salary received from the missionary societies. Therefore the trading had to be done surreptitiously although some still rejected the CMS ruling. Abigail Macauley, daughter of Samuel Crowther and wife of a CMS African minister insisted on trading despite pressure from the CMS.<sup>56</sup>

The views of African women are hard to find. A letter of 1881 from the wife of Archdeacon Crowther, son of Samuel Crowther, put the African ministers' wives into three categories, including names.<sup>57</sup> Firstly there were those who were educated and could take part in visiting, teaching, forming choirs, translating, women's classes and Sunday schools. Next came those who were completely uneducated and therefore

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<sup>54</sup> PRAAD SC23/1-728 Bartels, *History of Gold Coast Education from the Beginnings to 1858* (Typescript nd) p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> F. P. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1965), Appendix E.

<sup>56</sup> Kristin Mann, 'The Dangers of Dependence: Christian Marriage Among Elite Women in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915', *Journal of African Studies*, 24 (1983), 37-56 (p. 44).

<sup>57</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/3/O Sarah A. Crowther to Mrs. Whiting 17 January 1882.



could not assist their husbands. Finally there were those wives who had to keep themselves because their husband kept his salary to himself and the wives were then presumably too busy to help with the husband's work. The letter seems to have been written in the context of fears that African ministers' wives were not doing enough in the work of the church and some were trading. Abigail Oluwole, wife of a CMS Bishop in Yoruba, wrote at least two pamphlets - one entitled *Christian Marriage* and one on *The Training of Children*.<sup>58</sup> She rejected polygyny and saw the duties of a Christian wife as being centred around the home.

Medical missions were beginning to be established in West Africa at the beginning of the 20th century by the missionary societies, although dispensing medicines, often by missionary wives, was almost always seen as part of the missionary work. Medical missions combined care with religion. At Onitsha patients were required to produce a small card on which was written a verse of the Bible or a hymn.<sup>59</sup> These could be obtained only by attending a service. African women benefited particularly from such centres, for example, to help with problems associated with childbirth. One doctor in a hospital near Onitsha carried out cataract operations. He considered the medical centres were particularly important for African women who were left to starve when blind, whereas men in a similar position were fairly well looked after.<sup>60</sup>

### III African Women and Slavery: The Missionary Involvement

Domestic slavery where females were in the majority was a particular feature of West Africa. This section looks at the attitudes of the various missionary societies to what is more accurately called social bondage (so as to include pawnship) and how women were affected. The British Act of 1833 abolishing slavery on 1st August 1834 did not apply in British West Africa, except for the British forts on the Gold Coast. Much of what was later to become British West Africa, particularly Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria were not British colonies for a considerable part of the 19th

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<sup>58</sup> Kristin Mann, op. cit., pp. 43 & 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Mercy and Truth* 1897 p 100.

<sup>60</sup> CMS Archives Extracts from Annual Letters of Missionaries for 1907 Dr. Druitt to CMS Secretary Dec. 1907

century. The position was further complicated by the system of colonies, protectorates, etc., where different rules prevailed.

Overall the colonial authorities adopted a very cautious line on the abolition of slavery, especially as it was a major means of organising labour, including plantations and mining.<sup>61</sup> J. C. E. Parkes, Secretary for Native Affairs in Sierra Leone and himself a Creole, wrote in a 1893 memorandum that 'The domestic slavery of Western Africa is so peculiar that it is best to leave it alone'.<sup>62</sup> An annotation read 'Quite Right'. In 1898 Chamberlain, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, was asked about the British policy on escaped domestic slaves in Ibadan being returned to their owners. His reply was that no promise had been made to abolish domestic slavery in the Nigerian Protectorate but every possible encouragement was being given to substitute voluntary service.<sup>63</sup> Recent writers have seen African slavery as a continuum from servile outsider to partial or in some cases full membership of local kinship groups, that is the ideology of absorption.<sup>64</sup> This is the approach favoured by Miers and Kopytoff who in their introduction to their book *Slavery in Africa* argued that the domestic slavery of women was dissolved after the second generation.<sup>65</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of writers have emphasised the differences between what was called domestic slavery in West Africa and the plantation slavery of the southern United States and the Caribbean. J. Caseley Hayford, a Gold Coast barrister writing in 1903, said that 'The Gold Coast master is always humane and considerate towards slaves.'<sup>66</sup> E. Ayandele refers to the relative humaneness of slavery in Africa and quotes various explorers, including Mungo Park, in support of his argument.<sup>67</sup> In contrast another contemporary writer wrote about a chief, Pimi of Ede, who required

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<sup>61</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, 'The Problem of Slavery in the Study of Africa in *The Ideology of Slavery in West Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 11-38 (p. 31).

<sup>62</sup> Arthur Abraham, *Topics in Sierra Leone History* (Freetown: Leone Publications, 1976), p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> *Lagos Standard* 30 March 1898 p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> John Parker, *Making the Town Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Africa* (Oxford: James Curry, 2000), p. 88.

<sup>65</sup> Igor Kopytoff & Suzanne Miers, 'African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality', in *Slavery in Africa* ed. by Suzanne Miers & Igor Kopytoff, I. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), pp. 3-81 (pp. 32-4).

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Ephraim Caseley Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1970), p. 82.

<sup>67</sup> Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *African Historical Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p.31.

his farm servants to work in chains, although this, it was emphasised, was a departure from the usual conduct of Yorubans towards their domestic slaves.<sup>68</sup> R. Cruikshank, who occupied high office in the Gold Coast administration, wrote in 1853 ‘The natives of the Gold Coast may emphatically be termed a race of slaves, for ... slavery is the heritage to which every individual without exception is born.’<sup>69</sup> He explained this by saying that the head of a family could sell, pawn or give away his descendants. P. Haenger and others have commented that Cruikshank did not understand that slavery existed in many different forms and that West African social bondage rarely corresponded to popular ideas of slavery.<sup>70</sup>

Mostly the Christian missionaries in British West Africa believed or taught themselves to believe that domestic slavery as practised there for much of the 19th century was benign and not exploitative, as though putting the word ‘domestic’ in front of slavery changed the whole meaning of slavery. It existed ‘...because of the myth that domestic slavery was different and therefore acceptable.’<sup>71</sup> Whatever their views, it was difficult for them to attack such a strongly entrenched institution when they had few converts. They needed converts, even those who owned slaves.<sup>72</sup> In this they supported the colonial administration’s policy on domestic slavery where the creation of stable colonial systems required the collaboration of indigenous slave-owning elites.<sup>73</sup> Missionaries were in a minority position and could offer limited sanctuary only to slaves. Nevertheless the Scottish Presbyterians supported the insurrection by slaves at Calabar in the 1850s and the Basel Mission congregations grew rapidly in the 1880s as they attracted slaves fleeing from the Asante country.<sup>74</sup>

The CMS, in a publication as late as 1899, suggested that domestic slavery was the rule all over Africa for reasons of heredity, war, crime, famine and insolvency. The

<sup>68</sup> Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta, or Sunrise within the Tropics* (London: James Nisbet, 1853), p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Brodie Cruikshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), p. 313.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Haenger, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage* (Switzerland: P. Schwettwein Publishing, 2000) p. 2

<sup>71</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 255.

<sup>72</sup> Babatunde Agiri, ‘Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century’, in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 123-146 (p. 139).

<sup>73</sup> David Turley, *Slavery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge, CUP, 2000), pp. 257 & 259.

CMS considered that the lot of domestic slaves was not generally hard except for those taken in war or bought or where the master was 'Mohammedan'.<sup>75</sup> For Muslims slavery was seen as a legitimate means of religious conversion and this made it less likely that their slaves would be ill-treated.<sup>76</sup> The CMS view of 'Mohammedan' slavery reflects more the antagonism of the CMS towards Islam rather than reality. The Rev. Hope Waddell who served in Old Calabar suggested that slavery in Africa was different from that in America because, although individuals might be degraded in position, they were not seen as belonging to a degraded race because their masters were of the same race. Further the terms 'master and mistress' were not used but 'father and mother' and the children of slaves were treated similarly to free-born children.<sup>77</sup> When a concubine who was a slave bore a child, both were then free.<sup>78</sup> This patriarchal system, where both owner and slave were black, carries with it implications of a caring and loving relationship and is in contrast with a racist system of slavery. Almost universally those imposing slavery saw their victims as in some sense apart and inferior.<sup>79</sup> African domestic slavery was seen as an exception to this.

The position on social bondage in West Africa was further complicated by the existence of pawns whereby a person was held as collateral for a debt with the pawn's labour constituting interest on the debt and covering the cost of subsistence.<sup>80</sup> The principal had to be repaid before the pawn could be redeemed. Another difference between slavery and pawnship was that the pawn could not normally be sold or be used for human sacrifice. They were considered part of the society within which they were bonded, that is they retained their independence and political rights whilst slaves

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<sup>75</sup> CMS *The Sierra Leone Mission* (London: CMS, 1899), p.19.

<sup>76</sup> Babatunda Agiri, 'Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century', in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy, (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 123-146 (p. 144).

<sup>77</sup> H. M. Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), p. 315.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 318.

<sup>79</sup> D. Turley, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Pawnship in Historical Perspective', in *Pawnship in Africa - Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Toyin Falola and Paul E. Loveday (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 1-26 (p. 3).

lost both.<sup>81</sup> However pawns could end up as slaves if, for example, the principal was not repaid. Child pawnship, it has been suggested, could be interpreted as slavery since it lacked an element of voluntary consent.<sup>82</sup> Pawnship remained an alternative after the abolition of slavery.<sup>83</sup> In Igbo society most pawns were young girls who were valued for their domestic services.<sup>84</sup> In the Gold Coast in the period 1903-1910 female pawns greatly outnumbered males and thereafter pawns were almost exclusively female.<sup>85</sup> The colonial authorities were even less concerned about pawnship than slavery. In Sierra Leone the British administration spoke against pawning in the second half of the 19th century but took little action to deal with the problem. The 1898 Hut Tax war was seen as a vindication of not interfering with domestic institutions.<sup>86</sup> In Nigeria pawns became illegal by the end of W.W.I. They were prohibited in the Gold Coast in 1908.<sup>87</sup>

It has been suggested that there were more female than male slaves in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>88</sup> The reasons put forward are that they performed the more labour intensive tasks in agriculture, they were more easily assimilated, less likely to escape and helped to integrate male slaves. Perhaps most importantly they could reproduce. Buying a female slave was cheaper than paying a dowry for a wife. Slave women were less likely to run away or to take advantage of the emancipation of slaves because their children acted as a tie to their owner and because they would have had difficulty in maintaining themselves. They were also easier to capture trying to escape

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<sup>81</sup> Judith Byfield, 'Pawns & Politics: The Pawnship Debate in Western Nigeria', in *Pawnship in Africa Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* ed. by Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 187-222 (p. 187).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. (p. 195).

<sup>83</sup> Babatunde Agiri, 'Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century', in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 123-146 (p. 143).

<sup>84</sup> Felix K. Ekechi, 'Pawnship in Igbo Society', in *Pawnship in Africa - Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* ed. by Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 83-104 (p. 89).

<sup>85</sup> Gareth Austin, 'Human Pawning in Asante 1800-1950: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa', in *Pawnship in Africa - Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* ed. by Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 120-178 (p. 127).

<sup>86</sup> Allen M. Howard, 'Pawning in Coastal Northwest Sierra Leone 1870-1910', in *Pawnship in Africa- Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* ed. by Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 268-283 (p. 269).

<sup>87</sup> Gareth Austin, op. cit., (p. 121).

<sup>88</sup> Herbert S. Klein, 'African Women in the Atlantic Trade', in *Women and Slavery in Africa* ed. by Claire C. Robertson, & Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 29-38 (p. 31).

with children and more likely to accept their new lot in life since slavery gave them some protection which otherwise they would have had difficulty in obtaining. Nevertheless runaway female slaves, mostly concubines, were a problem in the early 1900s in Northern Nigeria.<sup>89</sup> They may also be seen as more conservative. Apart from running away they could, however, resist in various ways, for example, by faking illnesses and pregnancies and generally being difficult. However it was also easier for female slaves to be incorporated than male slaves because of their reproductive role.<sup>90</sup>

The British government passed anti-slave-dealing and emancipation ordinances for the Gold Coast in 1874 but the colonial officials were forbidden to interfere in disputes between slave and owner. It is not known how many slaves sought their freedom but to do this they would have needed to have knowledge of the law and how to enforce it. In an interview one woman born in 1890, some 16 years after the ordinance ending slavery, said that she did not know that she could get her freedom.<sup>91</sup> It has been suggested that most emancipated slaves chose to remain as tenants in the locality which they knew.<sup>92</sup> This could have reflected the benign nature of domestic slavery or lack of viable alternatives, particularly where the slaves were not in their own part of the country where kinsmen might have provided support. Emancipation was a slow process, as the colonial authorities intended, so that chaos did not result. This acted to the disadvantage of female slaves who would have more difficulty in finding the redemption price. It has been suggested that slaves thought less of freedom than of forging new relationships with their masters.<sup>93</sup> It has been further argued that, particularly for women, the status of being free or a slave was so close

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<sup>89</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Concubinage and the Status of Women Slaves in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria', *Journal of African History*, 29:2 (1988), 245-261, (p. 249).

<sup>90</sup> David Turley, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>91</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, op. cit., p. 229.

<sup>92</sup> Raymond Dumett & Marion Johnson, 'Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti and Northern Territories', in *The End of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Suzanne Miers & Richard Roberts (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 71-116 (p. 88).

<sup>93</sup> Joseph C. Miller, 'Breaking the Historical Chains: Martin Klein and Slavery', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34:3 (2000), pp. 512-531 (p. 518).

that the distinction could have been seen as insignificant.<sup>94</sup> This may be an indication of the relatively benign nature of domestic slavery for women at least.

In some societies, slaves could achieve high rank and own slaves of their own. In the Yoruba states, male palace slaves held important titles and key roles in the administration of the palace, kingdom or empire.<sup>95</sup> Slaves there were also involved with the worship of the gods. Others were used in the administrative branches of government or as armed retainers. Such offices were open to male slaves only. However there is some evidence that Yoruba female slaves were in positions of trust and authority.<sup>96</sup> There women of slave status were sometimes made queen mother, the highest office in the kingdom after that of the king. The queen mother had an important role in the religious life of the kingdom. In addition every office was held jointly by two people, an official (usually male) outside of the king's household and a woman within the palace. But for these few women who achieved high office there were the millions more who worked in the fields and performed the hum-drum daily tasks as slaves. These had little to gain from enslavement nor did they have much to lose as their life of farming and bearing children was about the same in either status.<sup>97</sup> Marriage was one way out and this offered status and, if she was the first wife, the possibility of power and influence over other wives and her husband. Some slave owners were women and this gave them an economic and political influence in society which in the event of the abolition of slavery they would lose.<sup>98</sup> Some women owned large numbers of slaves. For example, the Iyalode of Ibadan, a Madame Efunestan, was said to have 2,000 slaves on her farms.<sup>99</sup> S. Johnson, African pastor

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<sup>94</sup> Clare C. Robertson, 'Post-Proclamation Slavery in Accra: A Female Affair', in *Women and Slavery in Africa* ed. by Clare C. Robertson, & Martin A. Klein (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp 220-245 (p. 242).

<sup>95</sup> Babatunde Agiri, 'Slavery in Yoruba Society', in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 123-146 (p. 129).

<sup>96</sup> Edna G. Bay, 'Servitude and Worldly Success in the Palace of Dahomey' in *Women and Slavery in Africa* ed. by Clare C. Robertson & Martin A. Klein, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 340-367 (p. 341).

<sup>97</sup> Carol P. MacCormack, 'Slaves, Slave Owners and Slave dealers: Sherboro Coast and Hinterland' in *Women and Slavery* ed. by Clare C. Robertson & Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 271-294 (p. 284) p. 284.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (Lagos: CMS Bookshop, 1937), p. 325.

<sup>99</sup> Judith Byfield, 'Pawns and Politics, The Pawnship Debate in Western Nigeria', in *Pawnship in Africa - Debt Bondage in Perspective* ed. by Toyin Falola & Paul E. Lovejoy, ( Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 187-256 (p. 209).



of Oyo in the Yoruba states, noted in 1897 that well-to-do women were able to buy slaves of both sexes.<sup>100</sup> Such women would have had a vested interest in preserving domestic slavery and with their wealth and position would have been influential in its preservation. Within slave households there would have existed a hierarchy of slaves and women who, by influence or age, had achieved control over fellow slaves, and who would have lost status if domestic slavery was abolished. This would account for some of the enthusiasm for the institution. Slaves were seen as capital, sometimes the only capital which their owner possessed. Free women, too, would lose out as they would have to perform the tasks which had previously been performed by female slaves. These qualifications show that not all African women were likely to have been convinced of the need to abolish domestic slavery. In addition it provided a means of protection for marginal groups, including women.

The attitudes of the missionaries working in West Africa towards domestic slavery varied both from society to society and over time. For example in the Yoruba country the CMS missionaries supported domestic slavery which was seen as a relatively mild form of dependency and not exploitative.<sup>101</sup> This reflected their weak position with few converts and little influence and they may also have seen the slavery as shaped by particular local circumstances. Missionaries had to live with the various colonial authorities who for much of the 19th century did not concern themselves with domestic slavery. To have adopted a directly opposing stance to that of the authorities would have put the societies in a difficult position. It has also to be said that even once slavery was abolished as in the Gold Coast in 1874, for example, the missionary societies still took their cue from the colonial governments and did not encourage slaves to seek emancipation. There were also different views between the missionaries and their organising committees at home with those on the ground often supporting slavery as part of the West African social fabric, although since the missionaries were there to remodel society this objection hardly seems justified. The opinions of the West Africans were also important, both men and women, in that the missionaries were in a difficult position in opposing domestic slavery if their likely

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<sup>100</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (Lagos: CMS, 1937), p. 325.

<sup>101</sup> Babatunde Agiri, 'Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century', in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy, (London: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 123-146 (p. 139).

converts supported it. The missionaries were more concerned to do what they could to mitigate the situation of slaves and pawns rather than to seek abolition of these forms of social bondage. This cautious strategy required an ideological interpretation that distinguished African domestic slavery from plantation type slavery and could show that domestic slavery was benign.<sup>102</sup> There was little pressure from most African pastors to abolish domestic slavery, some of whom owned slaves as did members of their congregations. It appears that most of the missionary societies were more concerned to get rid of polygyny than slavery, although it can be argued that, for women particularly, the two were closely linked. The views of female slaves themselves have gone largely unrecorded but not entirely as the missionary archives contain some instances where they have been able to manipulate the slave system and the missionaries to their advantage. Women missionaries themselves wrote little about slavery although in the early part of the 19th century they might have been expected to be influenced by the anti-slavery propaganda in England. So far as is known, they did not seem to translate the slogan of 'Am I not a woman and a sister' to West Africa. As women, they were excluded from the debates which the missionaries held on slavery and their views were not sought, in public at least.

The Reverend Schmidt, a missionary in Sierra Leone, wrote to the CMS Secretary in 1853 that domestic slavery was common there and that this was a disgrace. In March 1879 the Bishop of Sierra Leone wrote to the CMS Secretary expressing his concern that a number of African ministers in Abeokuta had slaves and pawns. He considered that although the CMS might not be able to exclude slave owners from church membership, an indication perhaps of how wide the practice was, but that it was not right that church officials should be involved.<sup>103</sup> The CMS printed a minute on domestic slavery in Yoruba country in 1879.<sup>104</sup> This stated that the CMS were disturbed that Christians in the Yoruba country were still holding pawns and slaves. It was thought particularly reprehensible that some of these had been acquired since the owners had converted and some had since been made pastors. In theory the problem

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<sup>102</sup> Paul E. Loveday, 'The Problem of Slavery in the Study of Africa', in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* ed. by Paul E. Loveday, pp. 11-38 (p. 26).

<sup>103</sup> CMS Archives CA1 M22 Bishop of Sierra Leone to Rev. H. Wright 20 March 1879.

<sup>104</sup> CMS Archives CA2 L4 CMS Secretary to Bro. James Johnson 6 August 1879

had already been dealt with in 1857 when the second Bishop of Sierra Leone, the Rev. Weeks, had made a visit there and decided that no Christian could keep slaves. The 1879 minute on domestic slavery noted that slavery was common among 'heathen and Mahommedan neighbours' with the inference that the Christians had to show that they were different. The CMS decreed that all employees had to stop owning slaves as from 1st January 1880. The Niger and Yoruba Missions were specifically mentioned. Nevertheless when James Johnson in Abeokuta who was later to become an assistant bishop, went energetically about this task the CMS Secretary wrote to the Mission Secretary saying that he had to be removed from the town.<sup>105</sup> The CMS decision that Christians should not own slaves met with opposition and a conference was held in Lagos in March 1880.<sup>106</sup> Samuel Crowther had written on the benign nature of domestic slavery in 1857, implying that it was difficult to distinguish slave and master.<sup>107</sup> He chaired the conference and missionaries, catechists, teachers and laymen attended. A procedure was agreed for freeing slaves through payment of a nominal sum which was a procedure acceptable according to local custom. A number of CMS agents resigned rather than give up their slaves whilst others transferred their holdings but in reality still owned the slaves. There were strong arguments put forward for retaining pawns - principally that they were not slaves and were essential because hired labour was unknown. By June 1881 some thirty-three slaves had been released, some not without the threat of dismissing the owner from the CMS.<sup>108</sup> Pawn holding was merely to be discouraged. Agents then had to sign a declaration that they held no slaves and, apparently, pawns. Although it seemed the CMS had resolved the problem, a note from the Yoruba Mission some seven years later suggested that the earlier ruling on slavery was a dead letter because no African ministers had preached against slavery.<sup>109</sup> One missionary was told on a visit to Abeokuta by the local ministers and the church council that the slaves there were treated well and could work half the time for themselves and so purchase their freedom. It was suggested that the owners needed more education on the hatefulness of slavery. In 1897 the

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<sup>105</sup> CMS Archives CA/2/011 Rev. W. Moore to Rev. J. A. Maser 12 November 1879.

<sup>106</sup> CMS Archives G3 /A2/0 Domestic Slavery - Minutes of Conference held at Lagos 16-23 March 1880

<sup>107</sup> CMS Archives CA2/031 Rev. S. Crowther to Rev. H. Venn 4 March 1857

<sup>108</sup> CMS Archives G3 A2/0 Rev. S. Crowther to Rev H. Venn 10 June 1881

<sup>109</sup> CMS Archives G3 A2/0 Rev. W. Allan Report on the Yoruba Mission 16 April 1888

CMS Secretary wrote to their medical missionary, Dr. Battersby, warning him against encouraging slaves to seek their freedom, despite the fact that the Royal Niger Company had declared the abolition of slavery in the Niger territories in 1897. It seemed that Goldie of the Royal Niger Company had written to the CMS about the problems that rapid emancipation would cause. The CMS were very dependent on the goodwill of the Niger Company and could not afford to offend Goldie by going against his wishes. It has been suggested that the move to free slaves was used by the Company to keep the Colonial Office off its back.<sup>110</sup>

There was also support by Africans for domestic slavery. T. Sawyerr, a prominent Sierra Leonean, argued vigorously for domestic slavery and polygyny in a paper in 1888 which received wide publicity. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* recommended his pamphlet to its readers but argued that it would not disclose the contents for fear of being seen as taking sides.<sup>111</sup> This suggests that there was considerable debate at the time about slavery and polygyny, probably mainly in relation to the interior of Sierra Leone, i.e. the Protectorate. The *African Times* published a letter in 1867 from J. C. Briandt to the Rev. Locker who was serving on the Gold Coast.<sup>112</sup> Briandt wrote that, although slave-owning was odious, in West Africa the slave stood in relation to the owner as son to father. He argued against emancipation on the grounds that unless provision had been made for them they would again become slaves and gave some examples of this.

Female slaves receive little mention in the CMS missionary archives except for the mention of the severe punishment meted out to the two slaves who ran away from a CMS schoolteacher and assistant teacher. One of the girls died as the result of her punishment.<sup>113</sup> Individual missionaries tried to raise the profile of the fight against slavery. The Rev. Harding, a member of the Yoruba Mission, preached against

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<sup>110</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy & Jan S. Hogendorn, *The Slow Death for Slavery - The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897-1936* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 17.

<sup>111</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 9 June 1888 p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> *African Times* 23 April 1867 pp. 122-123.

<sup>113</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/3/0 Testimony of Isaac Mba to certain events which occurred at Onitsha in 1877 30 June 1882.

slavery in December 1889 and wrote to the CMS in London telling them about it.<sup>114</sup> However, the general impression is that the CMS was not prepared to match the rhetoric of the conference on slavery held in Lagos in 1880 with commensurate action.

A Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) report for 1834 set out the general position on slavery on McCarthy's island in the Gambia at that time and recounted the action which the WMMS had taken locally.<sup>115</sup> There were some 2-300 slaves, many of whom were owned by mulatto ladies who had come from Goree and Senegal. Some of these were married to British subjects. Some slaves were owned by Africans. Some slaves were free to offer themselves for hire provided they divided their earnings with their owner whilst others were house slaves. Slaves could be purchased for £20 and then freed. At this price any wide-scale purchases by the WMMS would have been impossible and it might also have been interpreted as encouraging the slave trade. Other evidence suggests that the price might have been even higher, perhaps £40-65, depending on the health and age of the slave. In 1835 the Rev. Fox organised a memorial to the colonial authorities from a number of slaves seeking their freedom which he also signed. The Governor seems to have been not indifferent to the slave problem. The memorial pointed out the anomalous position that liberated Africans were being landed in the Gambia but that there were still many slaves there. The Rev. Fox seems to have been unable to convince the local mission committee to take any action. He, himself, wanted to purchase two slaves and their families and train them as assistant missionaries. If he could not achieve a change in attitude on slavery then he seemed determined to help in individual cases. However, it appears that nothing came of this plan which would have required the consent of the local missionaries. The Rev. Fox was able to buy the daughters of a slave woman married to a free man, both of whom had been seized by the owner. He was less successful with other slave owners in trying to get them to part with their slaves who were members of the congregation of his church. P. Haenger has commented that the Methodists were not interested in slavery but did not tolerate their assistants owning

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<sup>114</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/2/0 Rev. Harding to CMS Secretaries 11 December 1889

<sup>115</sup> WMMS Archives *West Africa Gambia Correspondence* - Extracts from the Report of Rev. Fox of 1834.

slaves.<sup>116</sup> He does, however, mention the Rev. Bernasko, an African minister who bought the freedom of seven men but used them afterwards as though they were slaves. He eventually left the service of the WMMS.

The Basel Mission Committee from its viewpoint in Switzerland took the issue of domestic slavery in the Gold Coast much more seriously. Their own missionaries in the field rarely went further than condemning slavery as a sin and felt that a solution could be deferred. Some even went further and argued that slavery was a necessity in the Gold Coast and held society together. Other arguments put forward in support of slavery were that it could lead to the integration of the slaves into the family and that no other source of labour was available. In 1860, however, some of the Basel missionaries themselves began to question whether African Christians could own slaves.<sup>117</sup> It was decided locally, according to an interpretation of the Bible, that slaves had to be freed after six years. Although this was accepted by the African ministers, it was seen as applying to their own personal slaves and not those held as property by their families as a whole or by any other members of their family. Who was to decide who the actual owner was would have presumably depended on the African minister. The Mission Committee in Basel rejected this interpretation and the Missionsinspektor, Josenhans, wrote to the missionaries in West Africa declaring that the purchasing or holding of slaves was immediately forbidden to all those employed by the Basel Mission. In addition other members of the congregation were required to free their slaves and those seeking baptism were also to free their slaves. This was a brave move which Peter Haenger has suggested was necessary if support for the Basel Mission at home was not to suffer if it became known that the missionaries or their congregations owned slaves.<sup>118</sup> The missionaries in the field were opposed to the move, emphasising the beneficial nature of West African domestic slavery and that for many African Christians their only capital was their slaves. The Basel

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Haenger, *Slaves and Slaveholders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa* (Switzerland: P. Schwettwein Publishing, 2000), p. 100.

<sup>117</sup> See P. Haenger's contribution in *The Recovery of the West African Past* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998) ed. by Paul Jenkins, pp. 19-28.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

Mission abided by its decision but agreed that slaves were required to pay compensation to their former owners.

A Commission was set up to oversee the emancipation process and to investigate each case. Some catechists refused to accept the ruling and were dismissed. The catechist, Svankjer, was one such slave owner with 32 male and 4 female slaves who explained that he could not free his slaves until proper alternative work had been found for them.<sup>119</sup> Otherwise they would have to sell themselves again into slavery. Another catechist, Reindorf, was accused of selling a slave girl and at first dismissed from the Basel Mission's service but later reinstated on the advice of one of its missionaries.<sup>120</sup> The slave officially belonged to Reindorf's parents so this was seen as sufficient reason to absolve Reindorf. More importantly his services were highly valued.

There was never any question that the various missionary societies and their missionaries in West Africa were opposed to slavery of the plantation type. One of the many motives for the founding of the various societies had been reparation for the Atlantic slave trade. Nevertheless outside of the missionary societies there were probably many who were still convinced that even plantation type slavery was acceptable. Anthony Trollope on his visit to Kentucky in 1862 suggested that 'Any comparison between the material comfort of a Kentucky slave and an English ditcher and delver would be preposterous.'<sup>121</sup> He then goes on to describe the material advantages which the Kentucky slave enjoys, although he hastens to add that he does not believe that slavery even with all its comforts is equal to freedom without them. Robertson and Klein have supported this argument by suggesting that being a slave of a wealthy person was better than being a free but vulnerable woman of low status.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore they suggest that while women of low status had very little to gain from

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<sup>119</sup> Basel Mission Ghana Archives D 1 16 January 1864.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Haenger, op. cit., pp. 79-82.

<sup>121</sup> Anthony Trollope, *North America*, 2 vols, (London: Trollope Society, 2001), II p. 117.

<sup>122</sup> Clare C. Robertson & Martin A. Klein, 'Women's Importance in African Slave Systems', in *Women and Slavery in Africa* ed. by Claire C. Robertson & Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 3-25 (p. 18).



enslavement nor did they have much to lose.<sup>123</sup> Often slavery was better than the alternatives and interference was difficult to justify when individuals lost their means of subsistence.<sup>124</sup> On this basis it is easy to see that others were able to convince themselves that the domestic slavery practised in West Africa was acceptable or at the very least not to be interfered with. The missionaries in the field were in a difficult position. Where the colonial authorities condoned domestic slavery as they did for much of the 19th century, there was little which the missionaries could openly do without incurring the wrath of the authorities on whose goodwill they depended. This is particularly shown by the deference shown by the CMS to the wishes of the Royal Niger Company that the emancipation which the Company granted should proceed slowly. Similarly the colonial authorities' attitude was ambiguous because it was worried that abolition would cause social dislocation and because the Niger Delta chiefs were among the government's staunchest supporters.<sup>125</sup> However, even if the missionaries were constrained in what they could do there seems to have been little thought given to the subject and what might be done about it and even less action. What action it did take was not particularly effective. The CMS sent out the Rev. Allan of Bermondsey in 1888 to Sierra Leone to seek views on various topics including female education, polygyny and domestic slavery. His recommendation was that in carrying on the work in the interior of Sierra Leone, that is among the 'Mohammedans and Pagans' polygyny and domestic slavery should not be interfered with by the missionaries but left to 'the silent operation of truth'.<sup>126</sup> It has been argued that the missionaries questioned the established order and in this way helped to feed discontent against slavery.<sup>127</sup> However, most of the protest against domestic slavery in West Africa came from the Aborigines Protection and Anti-Slavery Societies.<sup>128</sup> Their ranks would have included those from the missionary societies.

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<sup>123</sup> Carol P. MacCormack 'Slaves, Slave Owners and Slave Dealers: Sherbro Coast and Hinterland in *Women and Slavery in Africa* ed. by Claire c. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) , pp. 271-294 ( p. 284).

<sup>124</sup> Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 265.

<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *The Ibo People and The Europeans* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 159.

<sup>126</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 28 January 1888 p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 260.

<sup>128</sup> Raymond E. Dumett, 'Pressure Groups, Bureaucracy and the Decision-making process: the case of slavery abolition and colonial expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 11:2 (1981), 193-215 (p. 206).

#### IV Women, Missionaries and Polygyny

If missionaries were in the main passive on the question of domestic slavery in West Africa or even came out in favour of it, this was not the case with polygyny or rather polygamy as it was called throughout the 19th century, both by missionaries and others. The term polygyny has been used here except when quoting from and using primary sources which refer to polygamy. Polygyny has been defined as ‘... a culturally determined, socially acceptable and legally recognised form of permanent marriage in which a husband may have more than one wife at a time’.<sup>129</sup> It therefore does not apply where a man has concubines or mistresses. Marcia Wright has suggested that the monogamous, patriarchal family was central to the missionary ideal of social order so that polygyny was seen as unacceptable.<sup>130</sup> Antipathy towards polygyny was shared, too, by those not connected with the missionary societies. Mary Wollstonecraft suggested that ‘Polygamy is another physical degradation ... that blasts every domestic virtue ...’ and is associated with the belief that ‘... woman must be inferior to man, and made for him’.<sup>131</sup>

Polygyny was not just a problem for missionaries. Others in Britain not associated with the church objected to it, although it also found some supporters. In this section the prevalence of polygyny in West Africa is looked at together with the secular reasons put forward to explain the practice and also the Biblical arguments for and against. As evangelicals reference to the Bible was important for the missionaries. Bishop Colenso took the lead in putting the case for allowing existing marriages to continue. He was unsuccessful and the attitude of both European missionaries and West African ministers hardened against polygyny but they failed to gain the support of the colonial authorities. African women’s views were not considered important to the debate but their attitudes have not gone entirely unrecorded.

The extent to which polygyny was prevalent in British West Africa is difficult to determine, although it was certainly common. R. Hyam has suggested that in Africa

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<sup>129</sup> Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Maryland NY: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 11.

<sup>130</sup> Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women* (London: James Currey, 1993), p. 154.

<sup>131</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London: J. M. Dent, 1977), pp. 77-8.

south of the Sahara about thirty-five per cent of all married men were polygynous, having in theory 2.4 wives each.<sup>132</sup> He uses information in *Continuity and Change in African Cultures* by W. R. Bascom and M. J. Herskovits (Eds.), Chicago 1959 pages 104-9. According to Maria Cutrufelli, 'Polygamy is almost a universal institution in Africa.'<sup>133</sup> H. Goldie, writing about his experiences as a missionary in Old Calabar at the end of the 19th century felt that polygyny was prevalent and mentions the 'headmen' as having harems.<sup>134</sup> This merely seems to have meant that they had a number of wives who, in fact, worked their own farms. In Yorubaland it has been suggested that the practice of polygyny was indigenous and of long-standing.<sup>135</sup>

There were kings and chiefs in West Africa who had a large number of wives e.g. the King of Dahomey with several hundred. Margery Perham visited the harem of Sarkim Kaita in northern Nigeria in 1931 where she saw 'row upon row of women, all fat, young and listless.'<sup>136</sup> The novel *Things Fall Apart* (written in 1958) by Chinua Achebe has lengthy descriptions of polygynous life in Nigeria and the relationships between the various wives and children and the husband. Polygyny, however, seems mostly to have been used as a practical means to accommodate African life and agricultural production, with the wives largely supporting themselves either on their own farms or by trading. A missionary writing about his time among the Yorubas at the end of the 19th century also emphasised that polygyny was universal but this comment may have been coloured by his remarks that '... so is the treachery, strife and domestic disorder that always accompanies it.'<sup>137</sup> Yet another wrote that it was an age-old custom for a man to have more than one wife in West Africa as a sign of wealth and power. There were comments, admittedly by Catholic missionaries, that eight out of ten Iboland Protestant converts became polygynists.<sup>138</sup> To some extent

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<sup>132</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 183.

<sup>133</sup> Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>134</sup> Hugh Goldie, *Calabar and Its Mission* (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1890), p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Anthony R. H. Copley, 'The Debate on Widow Remarriage and Polygamy: Aspects of Moral Change in Nineteenth Century Bengal and Yorubaland', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7:2 (1979), 128-148 (p. 135).

<sup>136</sup> Margery Perham, *West African Passage* (London: Peter Owen, 1983), p. 97.

<sup>137</sup> R. H. Stone, *In Afric's Forest and Jungle or Six Years Among the Yorubas* (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1900), p. 98.

<sup>138</sup> Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *The Ibo People and The Europeans* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 146.

polygyny can be seen as a means of controlling the younger men in a society since they would find it difficult to set up an establishment with several wives so the elders had a vested interest in preserving the system.

The missionaries needed to attract the wealthy and the powerful if they were to make conversions on any scale since these would then set an example which others who were less influential might follow. Their opposition to the practice was to cause heart-searching by both the missionaries and those affected and posed the risk of alienation from the local community. Ultimately, almost without exception the missionary societies ruled that polygyny was not acceptable. This meant that polygynists could not formally be members of the church and both baptism and communion, essential rites of the church, could not be extended to them. The problem of how to treat the wives of polygynists and whether to deny them the benefits of the church remained, since these women could be regarded as innocent parties caught up in the cross fire of the dispute. This was particularly poignant where it was the custom for widows to marry a husband's relations. G. Hewitt has written that the ruling on monogamy cut deeply into traditional African life.<sup>139</sup> It was suggested that the church in Africa would support polygyny if it were to be freed from European influences.<sup>140</sup> It can be argued that, as regards attitudes towards polygyny, missionary Christianity was more Victorian than Christian since it had no element of compassion or understanding of a different culture.

A 1995 comparative study of polygyny in 186 societies has given various explanations for polygyny.<sup>141</sup> It suggests that 19th century evolutionary theorists thought that polygyny occurred in the middle stages of social evolution, for example, Engels saw the social process as initially group marriage, then polygynous marriages and finally monogamy. He saw monogamy as developing with civilisation.<sup>142</sup> Thus opposition to polygyny could be justified as part of the missionary's role in bringing

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<sup>139</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1942* 2 vols (London: SCM Press, 1971), I p. 43.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Needham Cust, *Notes on Missionary Subjects* (London: Elliot Stock, 1888), p. 14.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Bretschneider, *Polygyny: A Cross-Cultural Study* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995), p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

civilisation to Africa. The study also suggested that a major female contribution to subsistence farming might cause a high degree of polygyny as would war where more men were killed than women and conversely more women were captured. With no effective means of contraception a post partem sex taboo was necessary and this in turn led to polygyny. Another consideration was that some men were better at attracting women than others.<sup>143</sup> This has overtones of social Darwinism and might have attracted support for polygyny at the end of the 19th century. I. Gaskujane has added further to this research and suggests that polygyny ensures continuation and growth of the ethnic community and the provision of a secure family situation for all adult females and one in which widows are not a problem.<sup>144</sup> In some cultures it was unacceptable to be unmarried and polygyny provided a solution to a surplus female population.<sup>145</sup> Polygyny therefore provides a link with the problem of what to do with the surplus of women in mid-Victorian Britain. Polygyny also meant that barren women were not rejected. All of these factors were present at one time or another in West Africa in the 19th century and provide a theoretical framework for considering polygyny which was largely unavailable to the missionaries at the time.

The debate on polygyny in the 19th century can be seen against the debate in Britain over divorce and the passing of the 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act which made the civil system of divorce a little more widely available.<sup>146</sup> Polygyny particularly concerned the missionaries who went to West Africa where it was closely associated with sensuality. It is not the intention here to enter into a theological discussion on whether the Old and New Testaments in the Bible authorised polygyny or not, although these were referred to both by those in favour of and those against polygyny. Although the prevailing view in the church seems to have been that polygyny was against the teachings of the Bible, others found that there was no such interdiction, quoting the numerous examples of those in the Old Testament who had had more than one wife. Occasionally there were those who argued for polygyny in Britain, suggesting that it would prevent the ruin of fallen women e.g. the Rev. M.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>144</sup> I. Gaskiyane, *Polygamy: A Cultural and Biblical Perspective* (Carlisle: Piquant Press, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women* (London: John Murray, 1993), p. 126.

Madden in 1889 but such suggestions were never taken seriously.<sup>147</sup> Such arguments would have undermined the case against admitting polygynists to church membership in West Africa. Others argued that divorce could be seen as facilitating successive polygyny, although even after 1857 divorce was still difficult and not easily available to large parts of the population. However it could be seen by some as providing concern about the way society was developing. If divorce could not be stopped at home then perhaps higher standards could be set for the Africans on polygyny.

More to the point were the determined efforts of Bishop Colenso in Natal to get acceptance of existing polygynists. In his celebrated 94 page letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he accepted that polygyny was at variance with Christianity and must be rooted out as should slavery.<sup>148</sup> He agreed that the Christians could not enter into polygyny nor increase the number of their wives but considered that Mosaic law expressly recognised the existence of polygyny. On compassionate grounds he felt that existing polygynous marriages could not be dissolved without serious wrong to the wives, and also to their children, who would have to be repudiated. He was putting the interests of African wives first. In his *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Polygamy* he emphasised the problem of the wives who were to be cast aside.<sup>149</sup> One telling argument was that it was not in accordance with religious practice to save the soul of one polygynous man at the expense of the rejected wives. Colenso was supported in his arguments by Archbishop Whateley of Dublin and the Bishop of Norwich, with the *Christian Remembrancer* of July 1858 quoting arguments in favour of polygyny from the three men.<sup>150</sup> In 1886 the Bishop of Exeter, the Rt. Rev. Bickersteff, advocated the baptism of polygynists.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Hugh Goldie, *Calabar and its Mission* (London, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1890), p. 325.

<sup>148</sup> John William Colenso, *A Letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury Upon the question of the Proper Treatment of Polygamy as Found Already Existing in Converts from Heathenism* (London: MacMillan, 1862), p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> John William Colenso, *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Polygamy* (Pietermaritzburg: May & Davis, 1955), p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), II p. 14.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. III p. 642.

Colenso's opponents argued that polygyny was no better than slavery, with the polygynous wives just as subject to the husband's 'despotic will' as slaves to their master.<sup>152</sup> Others too made a link between slavery and polygyny, thus seeking to transfer the antipathy felt towards slavery to polygyny as well.<sup>153</sup> Others were quick to point out that polygyny was a major cause of degradation for women.<sup>154</sup> Wives of polygynists could include sisters, sisters-in-law and nieces, it was argued by the Rev. H. Waddell, and he considered that even Bishop Colenso would want such wives repudiated.<sup>155</sup> The *African Times* (published in London) had an article in 1864 which claimed that polygyny outraged the moral sense and embraced the reluctant girl who had refused to become the fifth or sixth domestic slave.<sup>156</sup> Other comments made play of the coercion used to force women to become wives of polygynists. A report of 1861 from the Natal Evangelical Alliance argued that girls were tortured in order to make them marry polygynists. Polygyny was seen as self-perpetuating as more wives meant more daughters for whom the father received bride money. It has also been suggested that a girl's worth was judged by the position and possessions of her father so that it was better to have a polygynous father.<sup>157</sup> Despite the emphasis on the degradation which polygyny forced on women, the debate was focused on Biblical interpretations of whether or not polygyny was permitted. Those in favour could quote numerous examples of polygyny in the Old Testament whilst those against could argue that such instances were not typical and that a reading of the New Testament meant monogamous marriages were the only ones recognised in Christianity.

In 1856 Henry Venn, Secretary of the CMS, ruled that polygyny was unscriptural and issued a memorandum of guidance for CMS missions which stated that polygynists could not be accepted as church members.<sup>158</sup> The Lambeth Conference of Anglican

<sup>152</sup> Anonymous *An Answer to Dr. Colenso's 'Letter' on Polygamy* (PietMaritzburg: 1856), p. 89.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Needham Cust, *Notes on Missionary Subjects* (London, Elliot Stock, 1888), p. 5.

<sup>154</sup> Bernard Salvaing, *Les Missionnaires a la Rencontre de L'Afrique au XIXe Siecle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), p. 252.

<sup>155</sup> H. M. Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), p. 672.

<sup>156</sup> *African Times* 23 January 1864 pp. 82-83.

<sup>157</sup> Sir John Hobbes Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa* (London: Smith Elder, 1912), p. 59.

<sup>158</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society* 2 vols (London: SCM Press, 1971), I p. 42.



Bishops in 1888 discussed polygyny. Crowther submitted a memorandum which argued against diluting the church's strictures on polygyny since this would reveal Christianity as a weak religion.<sup>159</sup> This would also mean that those who had tried to undermine the Niger Mission's rules on polygyny would consider themselves triumphant. Despite this stance, he was sympathetic to the plight of polygynous wives who, he declared, disliked polygyny but were powerless to change it. He is reported as saying that polygyny was an insult to mankind (presumably including women too) but that in practice only men's feelings were considered and not women's.<sup>160</sup> The Conference accepted that there were some grounds for baptising polygynists since this would avoid the problems of deciding which wives were to be put aside, whether they could then marry other men and what was to happen to the children of divorced polygynous wives. The Conference agreed that a converted polygynist should not be baptised but could continue as a catechumen i.e. one seeking baptism, until he was 'in a position to accept the law of Christ'. Wives of polygynists might be baptised under circumstances to be decided locally.<sup>161</sup> A later report by fifteen Anglican bishops for the CMS confirmed that polygyny was not acceptable. The 1920 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops confirmed that 'persons living in polygamy' should not be admitted to baptism and that the polygynist had to make proper arrangements for his discarded wives before admission to church membership.<sup>162</sup>

The Rev. Daniel Sorinolu, an African CMS minister, wrote a 'Doctrinal Conversation on Polygamy' in 1881 which took the form of a fairly naive series of questions and answers.<sup>163</sup> He excused examples of polygyny in the Old Testament because God had given man a choice. His argument was that nature required man and wife to be as one which was not possible with polygyny. Dandeson Crowther, Archdeacon in the Niger Delta Pastorate, set out his views on Christian marriage and converts in 1886.<sup>164</sup> He

<sup>159</sup> CMS Archives G3/A3/0 Samuel Crowther: *Notes on the Life of Polygamy in West Africa* 1887

<sup>160</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* 16 February 1889 p.4.

<sup>161</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., III p. 646.

<sup>162</sup> SPCK *The Problem of Polygamy* (Lagos: CMS, 1926), p. 54.

<sup>163</sup> CMS Archives G3 A2/0 Rev. Daniel John Sorinola *Doctrinal Conversation on Polygamy* 19 May 1881

<sup>164</sup> CMS Archives G3 A3/0 D. C. Crowther *The Christian Marriage of Native Converts to Polygamy* 5 February 1886

maintained that no one in his congregations was a polygynist since on admission to the church a man had to choose one wife only whilst the others were given some money to start a new life. He would then have nothing more to do with them. Children complicated the situation since these could be claimed by the wife's family. Crowther believed that those wives who had been slaves would easily remarry whilst those who were freeborn would not find it so easy. Both husbands and wives found the situation difficult with some women reported as finding it very upsetting, which was hardly surprising. Some thought to renounce all wives and start again with a brand new wife but this was considered unacceptable, although possibly difficult to enforce. Despite Crowther's assurances that no members of his congregations were polygynists, this was not the case elsewhere. The Rev. Hewitt, in his note on the proposed Christian Marriage Ordinance of 1906 in Sierra Leone, wrote that, if a polygynist converted and was baptised with one or more of his wives, the church sanctified his marriage to one of the wives without necessarily dissolving the legal ties contracted with the other wives in his pre-baptismal days.<sup>165</sup>

James Johnson, Assistant Bishop of the Niger, had argued in 1888 that polygyny debased the African and considered that only victims of sensual gratification and voluptuaries would uphold such an institution.<sup>166</sup> He later relaxed his attitude because he feared that Islam, which permitted up to four wives, was gaining ground. His later view was that polygyny symbolised prestige, created large families and ensured marriage for all women and guaranteed protection for women. In his paper to the 1908 Anglican Conference, he argued that polygyny in Africa was not a moral question and that the Christian missions had been irrational in their attitude towards it. He believed monogamy was an ideal but believed in the moral, economic and social advantages of African polygyny.<sup>167</sup>

The WMMS adopted a similar stance to that of the CMS and rulings in 1885, 1888 and 1908 confirmed that polygynists were not eligible for church membership but

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<sup>165</sup> CMS Archives G3 A/1/0 Rev. W. H. Hewitt to CMS Secretary 2 March 1906

<sup>166</sup> Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *Holy Johnson, Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p. 288.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. p. 343

that wives could be considered on an individual basis. An extract from a 1897 WMMS report for the Klein Popo district regretted that the influential men in the area were polygynous and could not be admitted to church membership 'This unsatisfactory state of things weighs us down with grief and sorrow'.<sup>168</sup>

Local African churches, which were established at the beginning of the 20th century, took a more lenient view of polygyny. The United African Church permitted polygyny for both ministers and laity whilst another breakaway church formed by the Breadfruit Church members in Lagos decided that all clergy must be monogamous but not the congregation.<sup>169</sup> The Bremen Mission which had a small number of missionaries in the Gold Coast was reported as accepting polygamists whilst maintaining that monogamy was the true marriage according to God.<sup>170</sup> The CMS believed the missionaries of the American Southern Baptist Convention admitted polygynists to baptism.<sup>171</sup> However, in 1905 a resolution was agreed by a number of churches, including the CMS, WMMS and the American Baptists, that no polygynists were to be baptised nor were children of 'pagans and Mohammedans' unless they were given Christian guardians.<sup>172</sup>

The missionary societies' antipathy to polygyny did not find much support from the colonial authorities. Governor Sir Gilbert Carter of Lagos maintained in 1894 that the practice of polygyny '... had existed in Africa from time immemorial and seemed well adapted to the needs of the people.'<sup>173</sup> The Rev. Basden, a missionary in Nigeria, said that the government did not interfere in polygyny.<sup>174</sup> Polygyny was condoned throughout West Africa, much to the concern of the missionaries. Some saw polygyny as part of African culture. Edward Blyden, who originated from the West Indies, believed that it fulfilled important social and economic functions, for

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<sup>168</sup> *Lagos Standard* 2 November 1898 p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> G. Parrinder, *Religion in African City* (Westport Connecticut: Negro City Universities Press, 1953), p. 112.

<sup>170</sup> Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Maryland NY: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 33.

<sup>171</sup> CMS Archives G3 A2/0 Rev. W. A. Allan Report on the Yoruba Missions 16 April 1888

<sup>172</sup> *Sierra Leone Diocesan Church Monthly* June 1905.

<sup>173</sup> *Lagos Weekly Record* 7 July 1894 p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> George Thomas Basden, *Niger Ibos; A description of the primitive life, curious customs and animistic beliefs* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), p. 234.

example preventing the destitution of widows and orphans.<sup>175</sup> He alleged that the heat of the tropics made Africans more sexually active.<sup>176</sup> E. D. Morel also supported polygyny, arguing that such marriages produced more vigorous children and that monogamy might result in concubines or mistresses.<sup>177</sup> The *African Times* of 24th April 1865 carried an extract from an article by Captain (later Sir Richard) Burton in which he argued that polygyny was the natural state of man in Africa. He had also presented a paper on the subject to the Anthropological Society which the *African Times* strongly criticised for bothering with such nonsense. Burton was a vice president of the Society. His work was influential and it has been suggested that his anti-missionary sentiments made him popular in England.<sup>178</sup> Burton had visited the Mormons in Utah and had written dispassionately in *City of Saints* (1861) about their practice of polygyny which was at the time outraging Americans. Mary Kingsley, whose publications on West Africa were influential, believed that polygyny was ‘not an unmixed evil’ because it was impossible for one woman to do all the domestic chores and because the practice was so widely diffused.<sup>179</sup> She saw it as an essential part of the social structure and considered that its abolition would have disrupted African life. Mary Gaunt, a female traveller in West Africa, considered that there was something to be said for ‘the polygymous system’.<sup>180</sup> Missionary attitudes towards polygyny, however, changed little for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The CMS Secretary, Phillip Venn, had produced a memorandum in 1856 which was broadly reproduced by the Lambeth Conference of 1888, that wives of a polygynist could be admitted but not the polygynist himself.<sup>181</sup>

In 1888 T. Sawyerr, well-to-do bookseller and publisher and a prominent Sierra Leone man, and a member of the CMS there, submitted a paper to a local CMS conference arguing that polygyny (and domestic slavery) should be tolerated since monogamy resulted in infanticides and abortions. He had been a member of the Legislative

<sup>175</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden* (Oxford: OUP, 1967), p. 217.

<sup>176</sup> Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *African Historical Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p. 207.

<sup>177</sup> Edmund Dene Morel, *Affairs of West Africa* (London: Wm. Heinemann, 1902), pp. 227/8.

<sup>178</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *Africanus Horton* (Oxford: OUP, 1972), p. 60.

<sup>179</sup> Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 662.

<sup>180</sup> Mary Gaunt, *Alone in West Africa* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), p. 282.

<sup>181</sup> Eugene Stock, op. cit., II p. 111.

Council since 1883. He was subsequently made to resign from the Finance Committee of the CMS. At the conference it was suggested that the CMS should tolerate polygyny until the gospel had been spread. Others argued that polygynists could be admitted to church membership provided they took no more wives. Yet more people contributed to the debate on polygyny, for example, Charles Carrington who resorted to publishing his *Plea for Polygamy* in Paris since it contained a licentious account of the Roman emperors and their marriages. He was an American, brought up, in his own words, as a strict Puritan and worked in India for one of the Boston merchant houses there for a number of years. He had wanted to be a missionary but had not been accepted. He attacked the 'priggish propriety of Exeter Hall', calling monogamy 'the dissolute daughter of paganism and Romanism'.<sup>182</sup> He argued that polygyny did not degrade women and that prostitution in Islamic countries was almost unknown. In West Africa the debate largely coalesced into Africans versus Europeans and provided, it seemed, another example of a prurient and bestial nature which had to be overcome.

What was missing from the debate were the views of the women involved. Abigail Oluwole, wife of an Assistant CMS Bishop in Yoruba, published a pamphlet (late 19th/early 20th century) on Christian marriage where she stated that 'God instituted marriage between only two persons, a man and a woman'.<sup>183</sup> This was the voice of mainstream missionary activity and a Bishop's wife was hardly likely to put forward radical views. Frances Dennis, a missionary stationed in southern Nigeria, recorded in her journal of 1902 that one of the converts called Abraham had to give up three of his wives but his remaining wife did not like this.<sup>184</sup> The explanation given was that she preferred not to be the equal of her husband but possibly she resented the lack of company and loss of authority over the other wives. How far her views were typical of African women is impossible to say on the little evidence available as on most other subjects especially affecting women. I. Amadiume has suggested that women in Igboland could increase their status and wealth through the institution of 'female

<sup>182</sup> Charles Carrington, *A Plea for Polygamy* (Paris: Charles. Carrington, 1898), p. 69.

<sup>183</sup> Kristin Mann, 'The Danger of Dependence: Christian Marriage Among Elite Women in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915', *Journal of African Studies*, 24 (1983), 37-56 (p. 41).

<sup>184</sup> *Journals of Frances Dennis* CMS Unofficial Papers Acc4 13 October 1902.

husbands'.<sup>185</sup> These were in effect slaves but had the status and customary rights with respect to the woman who had bought them as a woman to her husband, presumably the main advantage being that they could not be sold. The Rev. Basden, who was a missionary among the Ibos from 1900 onwards, felt that the taking of a second wife was sometimes a joint decision between husband and wife, often after the birth of the first child.<sup>186</sup> Polygyny also provided support systems for children and domestic help which could encourage women's economic and political activities. Leith-Ross has suggested that sometimes a wife found the dowry for further wives and that this was a source of great satisfaction.<sup>187</sup> The contrary view is that no woman would want to share a husband's love or, perhaps more realistically would want to share her power over her husband with the possibility of being usurped in his affections.

In her work on the marriage of the elite in colonial Lagos, Mann sets out the opposing views of men and women on plural marriages.<sup>188</sup> She is describing an urban phenomenon where modernity played an important part in contrast with more conservative views outside the large towns. For the men polygyny ensured children and protected women, particularly old women since these would devolve as wives to their husband's brother or son. The elite women insisted on Christian marriage and they and their parents were in a position to insist on this. Monogamy meant that the husband devoted his energies and wealth to one woman and, it was believed, protected her from divorce. In the relatively sophisticated and almost isolated society which developed in Lagos, a man's wealth and position could be judged other than by the number of wives he had. Nevertheless polygyny still appealed and gave rise to a new domestic arrangement whereby men had one official wife but had a number of outside unions.<sup>189</sup> Christian marriages were monogamous in name only. Hyam suggests that Christian marriage had little appeal in Lagos with only fifty such

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<sup>185</sup> Ife Amadiune, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987), p. 46.

<sup>186</sup> George Thomas Basden, *Niger Ibos: A description of the primitive life, curious customs and animistic beliefs* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), p. 329.

<sup>187</sup> Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939), p. 125.

<sup>188</sup> Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos 1880-1915* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985).

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p. 120.

marriages a year in the early 20th century out of a Christian population of 10,000.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore he adopts an extreme position that the restriction to one wife encouraged prostitution and disasters such as the 1906 syphilis epidemic in Buganda, although he does not offer any supporting evidence.

## V Conclusions

Missionaries set out to remodel the society which they found in West Africa and women were seen as an important part of this effort. There were many ways in which missionaries affected African women but the process was not all one-sided. People heard what the missionaries had to say but scrambled the message - sometimes finding in the mission community something valuable and meaningful to them, sometimes using their mission education to gain secular advantage.<sup>191</sup> African women learnt to take from the missionaries what they felt they wanted in terms, for example, of education and health, and, if necessary, rejected what they saw as unacceptable. It is not difficult to criticise the ways in which the missionaries went about the religious conversion process for women. Typical criticisms are that they lacked vision and attempted to recreate a European middle-class mentality without adjusting to local circumstances. The missionaries' condemnation of women traders was one such example, although women were able to evade or ignore this restriction. Others have argued that the religion brought by the missionaries failed to alter the fundamental realities of life for women in West Africa where they continued to look after a family and worked, whether in farming or trading. The condemnation of local women's groups and their replacement by sewing and Bible classes can be seen as restrictive. How far the freedoms from taboos and discrimination against women were replaced by other restrictions is a moot point. The missionaries themselves believed that they were championing the dignity and status of women.

Much of the education provided for women (and for men) was very basic. There were problems in getting adequately trained teachers since there were no teacher training facilities for women in West Africa and training had to be done on the job. The

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<sup>190</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 185.

<sup>191</sup> Frederick Cooper & Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 7.



schools provided employment for African women, who, although they had to teach within the constraints laid down by the missionaries and the government guidelines, would have been able to skew their teaching towards what they saw as the needs of their pupils. Getting girls to go to school was a problem. Fewer girls were taught than boys but the missionaries showed their concern about getting girls to come to school. They did have an ulterior motive since they believed that an uneducated wife and one who was not Christian would drag down a husband,

If the missionary education was limited, then what was more constraining was the expectation that women would not trade, a traditional role for them in West Africa. This ban was an ideal and even some African ministers' wives traded. An alternative was dressmaking, a new opportunity for women which may have developed partly because the missionaries insisted that converts were clothed. Nudity was associated with deliberate shamelessness and immodesty with clothes conversely being synonymous with decency and civilisation.<sup>192</sup> Missionaries saw dressmaking as preferable to trading but, in terms of socialising and developing business acumen, for example, it probably came a poor second for most women. Those women who had obtained some rank in the markets such as the Iyalodes of Yoruba would have felt this particularly.

The missionaries believed that the changes they were bringing about elevated the status of African women. Critics have disputed this. The missionaries are accused of being narrow in their outlook when confronted with a society organised very differently from that at home. In a strange land they sought to impose European rather than Christian values. The education which they provided seemed to reinforce this view since it was domestically orientated. It is not difficult also to point to the kill-joy aspects of the evangelicals who went to West Africa. The dancing which the Methodists disliked and which they petitioned the colonial authorities to ban would not have been quite so depraved as it seemed to outsiders unversed in the symbolism and purpose of such dancing.

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<sup>192</sup> Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 134.

Interracial relationships were not acceptable to the missionary societies, however much they may have appealed to a very small number of the missionaries working in West Africa. The monogamous family was the ideal put forward by the missionaries, provided it did not cross racial boundaries. Only those who had achieved high standing within the societies were able to get away with defying the ban. If this attitude on race seemed harsh, it can be seen as in line with that of the colonial authorities. One colonial administrator, commenting on the Asante, said that they were ‘... treacherous, venal, cruel, malevolent, uncandid’.<sup>193</sup>

Rejection of polygyny can be seen as a rejection of local beliefs. The missionary requirement on monogamy was deeply wounding to traditional African life. No one in the missionary circles took up the banner from Bishop Colenso in the 1860s and campaigned in support of polygyny. There were signs that the abrupt end to polygyny which had been called for by the missionary societies began to be mitigated by some understanding of the difficulties in which this placed the dispossessed wife. The Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1920 laid down that adequate provision had to be made for wives who had to be renounced before the husband could be admitted to church membership.<sup>194</sup> Wives were to be admitted even whilst married to a polygynous husband. In some instances the missionaries were prepared to turn a blind eye to the practice provided that it was not too blatant. In any case it was sometimes difficult to check on additional wives. This limited tolerance might have been the result of the new African churches accepting polygyny and the belated recognition that polygyny was a deeply seated practice in West Africa. The Rev. Basden who worked in Iboland in the first decades of the 20th century shows some understanding of why polygyny was so prevalent.<sup>195</sup> He looked at the problem both from the husbands’ and wives’ points of view, commenting that the casting aside of additional wives revealed a lack of compassion and caused distress to both parties. In requiring this renunciation, the missionary societies were condoning divorce although their argument would have been that the original marriages were not valid and that no sacrifice was too great to make. The fact that Islam, ‘the false faith’ permitted

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<sup>193</sup> PRO CO 520/31 p. 358.

<sup>194</sup> SPCK *The Problem of Polygyny* (Lagos: CMS Bookshop, 1926), p. 54.

<sup>195</sup> George Thomas Basden, op. cit., pp. 229-31.

polygyny was seen as yet another reason to oppose it. It has been suggested that the overheated visions of Islam in the 19th century concentrated on the conjugal privileges of the Moslem husband and the harem and this was another reason for rejecting polygyny.<sup>196</sup> Descriptions of purdah life in India would also have confirmed this view although for most polygynous marriages in West Africa this type of seclusion was not typical.

Polygyny and domestic slavery were closely linked, with slaves often becoming wives but there was little attempt made by the missionaries to exploit the antipathy felt towards slavery and direct it towards polygyny. Polygyny was seen by the missionaries as degrading, although, not unexpectedly, to women rather than to men. The idea of several women sharing the affections of one man was offensive to the missionaries who promoted the ideal of the monogamous family as being at the heart of their teaching. This attitude was reinforced by their interpretation of the Bible. Women were seen as degraded by polygynous marriages but they were the ones to suffer most when the husband was required to repudiate his extra wives.

Female slaves were particularly affected by their status. D. Campbell, a 'pioneer missionary' in central Africa for 23 years, wrote 'Add slavery to polygamy, and reduce a woman to the status of a slave, then you have the sum of human degradation, the lowest creature on God's earth - a slave woman'.<sup>197</sup> There was less chance that they could earn enough to buy their emancipation, they were encumbered with children whom they would not wish to leave behind and how were they to support themselves if they were freed and were on their own. The greatest problem for women slaves who sought their freedom was how to earn a living. The Christian missionaries, and also European society, saw marriage as the primary objective for women. For women to have worked to support themselves, particularly by market trading, was unacceptable and this may have been yet another reason why domestic slavery was tolerated. The decline of the anti-slavery movement in Britain after the

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<sup>196</sup> John Cairncross, *After Polygamy was made a Sin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 104.

<sup>197</sup> Dugald Campbell, *Ten Times a Slave but Freed At Last: the thrilling story of Bwanikwas, a Central African Heroine* (Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, 1916), p. 152.

1860s may also be significant in this toleration of slavery. Missionaries were constrained by the colonial authorities who largely acquiesced in domestic slavery for much of the 19th century and this contributed to the ambivalent attitude which missionaries took towards it.

Domestic slavery and polygyny bore down heavily on women. The missionaries' condemnation of polygyny took little account of what could happen to the repudiated wives whilst their seeming indifference to domestic slavery was another yoke which women had to bear. Yet conversion to Christianity changed African women. This was the intention. The missionaries saw the changes as elevating women, their critics as depriving them of their heritage. To a limited extent African women could choose what they accepted from the missionaries who had to attract their converts voluntarily. Success in doing this enabled them to accept to some extent what they liked in the conversion process and still retain parts of their traditional life which some practised more or less openly.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusions

The purpose of my thesis has been to argue that women were essential to the missionary effort as it developed in 19th century British West Africa. Missions were not just for men. What women had to offer and what they did, as set out in the detail of the previous chapters, supports my contention about the centrality of women to missionary work and also that understanding what they did is essential to an appreciation of what the missions were attempting to do. What women accomplished in West Africa adds to the knowledge of what missions generally set out to achieve. Women's missionary work can also be seen as reflecting the wider issues in society affecting women in the 19th century. Women's influence was seen as civilising as was missionary work so women missionaries could exploit this double role. That women brought their own special qualities to the work which they did was increasingly recognised.<sup>1</sup> Helping the less fortunate was not merely a womanly and imperialist virtue but also a Christian duty.<sup>2</sup> It was not just when women were away from home that they could try out new ideas and new methods of working. The women's missionary societies at home proved that women were just as adept as men at the business of running such societies.

What this thesis is attempting to show is that what happened in one area of the missionary enterprise, British West Africa, was not just a masculine preserve, however hard men tried to give the impression it was. It was not that they did not appreciate the considerable efforts which women made to missionary work. The recruitment of single women towards the end of the 19th century was recognised as a significant factor in the expansion of the missionary societies' work overseas. However, women's efforts were seen at the time as altogether of a different order to that of men's. The male missionaries saw women as mainly there to serve their husbands and their missionary colleagues, to be helpmeets. Women, whilst having to acquiesce in this - the efficient missionary selection process would have mostly ruled

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Kathleen Lyttleton, *Women and their Work* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), p.77.

out those who might have made objections - were able to negotiate and extend their own role, especially once single female missionaries were being sent out at the end of the 19th century.

The missionary societies did not on the whole specify what female missionaries in West Africa were to do, other than 'women's work' and to be subject to the overall control of the local male missionary committee. Men on the other hand had their responsibilities carefully laid down and there was an expectation, a tradition of what they should do. Female missionaries saw their role as improving the lives of others (albeit with the aim of conversion) as opposed to just conversion and so their success was more easily achieved.<sup>3</sup> This tied in with the expectation of some evangelists from the 1870s onwards that social transformation was no longer linked so explicitly to the process of personal conversion but more in terms of the spread of Christian civilisation and idealism.<sup>4</sup> It seems likely, however, that humanitarian motives were important from the start of missionary work.<sup>5</sup>

In colonial settings women's social and familial roles could be reinterpreted into, it has been suggested, a 'bolder and more egalitarian vision of the female future'.<sup>6</sup> Women missionaries, possibly unconsciously, acted as a testing ground for new ideas about women's role in society. Feminists have stressed the way in which philanthropic work was one of the few acceptable bridges to the world beyond the home.<sup>7</sup> In West Africa women ran large establishments and took on new responsibilities, showing what they could do if given the opportunity. Education for girls there was largely the result of women's efforts, more so than in Britain where men were, for example, heavily involved in setting up the Girls Public Day School

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<sup>3</sup> Fiona Bowie, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Women's Presence', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present* ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp 1-19 (p. 10).

<sup>4</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag - Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Piggin, 'Assessing Nineteenth-Century Missionary Motivation: some Considerations of Theory and Method', in *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Historian* ed. by Derek Baker, D. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 327-337 (p. 336).

<sup>6</sup> Julia Bush, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), p. 10.

Trust. The close link between education and work makes the efforts put into the teaching of girls even more significant. Female missionaries were more conscious of the reality of the lives of West African women than men and were often the instigator of changes in customs affecting them.

Beginning with work at home (Chapter II) on which the missionary effort overseas depended, the work of the Women's Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) showed how women set about managing an organisation which they controlled and financed. Thus it was run for women by women. This raised the more general question of whether it was better for women's activities to be treated separately thereby running the risk of being ignored except within a limited area of responsibility or to be able to make a contribution to all the work of the main body but to be a small part of a large organisation. The Auxiliary itself worried that it was being ignored by the WMMS and being left with the parts of the missionary work which the WMMS was not especially interested in. The Auxiliary never expanded into evangelization and itineration nor into medical work so that its separateness meant that it was restricted to a more narrow area agreed with the WMMS which it was difficult to re-negotiate.

In a sense all female organisations like the Auxiliary presented a challenge to the main societies. They were run almost entirely on a voluntary basis so their costs were low. This split between the WMMS and the Auxiliary meant that there was a diversity of interest in missionary work. The Auxiliary was always disappointed when its missionaries married, even if to WMMS men. They were lost to the cause of the Auxiliary even if they continued as a missionary wife. Those who married within six years of training had to repay the costs on a sliding scale. The Auxiliary did not train future wives. That they had done some charitable work in the parish and could provide a suitable reference from their minister was seen as sufficient. The Auxiliary put few of its resources into Africa. In the nineteenth century Africa suffered as being almost an after thought in terms of missionary work as efforts were concentrated on India and China. This was the attitude of most of the societies where it was accepted



that India had priority as the jewel in the crown perhaps or where missionaries found it slightly easier to work.

Chapter II also covered the training of female missionaries. Training and education were increasingly important for women in the 19th century as they attempted to make their way into paid occupations. Being trained as a female missionary offered one avenue of paid employment with the prospect of secure employment of a professional nature. Eugene Stock, the historian of the CMS, believed that, in the 1890s, the average social class of women missionaries was higher than that of men on the basis that there were more self-supporting women among them.<sup>8</sup> The men who had been through the training at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) College at Islington were rather looked down on and in 1881 an Anglican bishop had commented:

‘It has been the custom to think of missionaries as an inferior set of men, sent out, paid and governed by a superior set of men formed into a committee in London. Of course you must have examiners and secretaries and an office to see that the inferior men are not too inferior; and you must have a cheap set of colleges in which the inferior men may get an inferior education and you must provide an inferior sort of ordination which will not enable them to compete in England with the superior men.’<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the comments by the Anglican bishop above, the training given to male missionaries was thought to increase their social status so most missionary societies insisted that their missionaries did not marry until after their training. This was to avoid having a wife with an inferior social status. Nevertheless some of the single women who were recruited at the end of the 19th century must have felt themselves to be socially superior to those to whom they were responsible. In a class conscious era, this may have deterred some women from becoming missionaries and made them turn to other areas of work.

The training provided for women was never on a par with that provided for men. The Auxiliary, for example, never had its own colleges. The CMS mostly used colleges for women set up at the initiatives of others, although it did have one home of its own

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Williams, ‘The Missing Link’ The Recruitment of Women Missionaries in Some English Evangelical Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Women & Missions: Past and Present* ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener, (Oxford, Berg, 1993), pp. 43-69 (p 57).

<sup>9</sup> Roland Anthony Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longman, 1966), p. 12 (n).

in Highbury. Whilst others were prepared to set up colleges, there seemed little point in duplicating this work and there was certainly a proliferation of missionary colleges for women from which to choose. Women needed less training than men because it was felt that their inherent nature made them caring.

The theme in chapter III was that of the work of women missionaries in West Africa. The female missionaries challenged the gender norms of Victorian society as did female travellers like Mary Kingsley.<sup>10</sup> Unlike explorers and travellers, missionaries came to change society. Female missionaries could claim to be doing this on the basis of a special calling. Andrew Porter has suggested that Margaret Strobel's criticisms of female missionaries - that they operated ethnocentrically and maternalistically in attempts to improve the condition of indigenous women - leads to the unhelpful conclusion that one party's cultural change is another's cultural imperialism.<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Isichei has suggested that women in Africa experienced Christianity as empowering and gave them a means of challenging male-dominated sacred worlds.<sup>12</sup> In Antoinette Burton's view, British women imagined the women of India as helpless colonial subjects and constructed 'the Indian woman' as a foil against which to judge their own progress.<sup>13</sup> Florence Hamilton has suggested that British women in general in India took the 'we know best what you need' attitude of reformers and that this attitude was magnified by racial prejudice.<sup>14</sup> Andrew Porter concludes that highly effective as missions were in promoting cultural change, they were among the weakest agents of 'cultural imperialism'.<sup>15</sup> Jane Hunter believes that in the United States women missionary boards in the early 20th century opposed 'cultural imperialism', although she accepts that 'heathens' were meant to learn the superiority

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Neil Porter, 'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25:3 (1997), 367-391 (p. 371).

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, 'Does Christianity Empower Women? The case of Anaguta of Central Nigeria', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present*, ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 209-228 (p. 209).

<sup>13</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and "The Indian Woman," 1865-1915', in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* ed. by Nupur Chaudhuri & Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 137-157.

<sup>14</sup> Florence Hamilton, 'Some of Us are Imperialists, Some of Us Are Not', in *Women Migration and Empire* ed. by Joan Grant, J. (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 1996), pp. 103-121 (p. 107).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Neil Porter, op. cit., (p. 388).

of Christian ways.<sup>16</sup> In West Africa it would be unfair to see African women as the hapless pawns of imperial agents. They were able to decide what to accept and what to reject from what the missionaries had to offer.

As the missions expanded their operations to cover ever larger parts of West Africa (and the world), they depended on the increasing numbers of women employed by the missionary societies. The increase in the employment of women in missions was part of the wider change in society as women sought paid work outside of the home. Not only were wives involved in this work but also missionary widows and single female agents. Wives made it much easier for the mission station to become a place of refuge. This was particularly the case for children and they in turn provided the nucleus of a school. The expanded role of the mission station helped to extend the power and influence of the missionaries. The missionary couple provided a practical example of monogamous Christian marriage. Missionary women were seen as the only ones who could provide secondary education for girls since it would have been unacceptable for men to teach girls once they had reached puberty. With no proper facilities for training African women as teachers (unless they came to England), the only chance for secondary education for girls lay with female missionaries. They took readily to this which was seen as particularly important since education was seen as necessary to remedy the perceived ignorance of the African woman.

Given the opportunity women took readily to those tasks seen as traditionally coming within the male purview such as administration, buildings and agriculture. These were a necessary part of running large schools and women showed that they were just as good as men in these areas given the opportunity. Just as interesting was that they seemed to take readily to such work, to enjoy it and were successful at it. Whether such success made them more acceptable to their male colleagues is not clear. To challenge men in the so-called areas of masculine superiority could have been to court disaster but men were prepared to accept what missionary women did, perhaps more so than at home. There were obstacles placed in the way of single female

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Hunter, 'The Home and the World: The Missionary Message of US Domesticity', in *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* ed. by Leslie A. Flemming (London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 159-166 (pp. 161-164).

missionaries. They could not live on their own but had to live either with a missionary couple or in pairs. This meant in practice that three women had to be employed so that one could be on leave at any one time. This cancelled out some of the advantages of the cheaper salaries paid to single female missionaries. Some men thought single women were just a nuisance and preferred one man to two women but they were overruled by their society. Personalities were important in the narrow missionary world where relationships between those in the field could make or mar the work. Simply being religious did not ensure that all went well and this applied to women no less than men.

Missions provided opportunities for women which were not available at home. Out of sight, although, as they hoped, always within the public consciousness, they could extend their role without arousing the antagonism which similar activities at home might incur. Missionary women, however, made sacrifices. They sent their children back to Europe to be brought up, sometimes by friends or relations or at the children's homes provided by the societies. The mother's influence in persuading children to become missionaries, for example Mary Slessor, is well attested but another way of encouraging children to think about taking up missionary work was to have them brought up by the missionary societies. The children's homes provided some of the future missionaries, perhaps one of the reasons for setting them up.

The Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the subject of Chapter IV, was the first secondary school for girls set up in British West Africa. It was set up in Britain's oldest established colony there and in a town with a largely Christian population. As at home, such schools raised questions about the aim of secondary education for girls, the curriculum, the examinations the girls should take and the school's admissions policy. The Annie Walsh School itself was a testing ground to see if African girls could be educated beyond primary level. The school gave women in Britain a direct link with work for West African women, above and beyond the usual missionary links. The readiness with which funds were collected for the building and later on for extending the school indicates that there was a great deal of sympathy and understanding of the need to provide secondary education for African

girls. The school benefited from the interest that was being generated at home in secondary education for girls at the time. The CMS itself was clear why it had started the Annie Walsh School - the need to provide educated wives for African ministers, the need to provide female teachers and the need to educate future mothers as Christians. How far the girls and parents accepted these reasons is not known. Despite setbacks from time to time, the school was the forerunner of other similar schools established by the CMS and other missionary societies. Since the head teachers were always European, missionary women were an essential part of the school's success, as were African women since they provided most of the staff for the school.

The visiting (or management) committee of the school was for much of the 19th century composed of women only. The setting up of the committee was one of those rare occasions when the male missionaries who tried to take over the running of the school on the grounds that the women in Sierra Leone were too busy to involve themselves with the school were over-ruled by the then Secretary of the CMS, Henry Venn. He insisted that only women should look after women's or rather girls' affairs. The visiting committee had a mixed record due to the rapid turnover of missionary wives who served on the committee - African women were only admitted later - so that they lacked the experience to deal with some of the forceful headmistresses that were attracted to the school. Some of the school's teachers served for long periods and became well established in Freetown, both within the missionary circles there and as local personalities. This standing helped them in developing the school when sometimes the support for girls' education faltered. It certainly always came second to that for boys' education. Most of the headmistresses appeared to have enjoyed good relations with both the African staff and pupils with these feelings being reciprocated from time to time.

The school instituted a number of scholarships which assisted the daughters of African ministers and teachers to attend. Later these scholarships were extended further so charges of elitism became less valid. Like the new schools for girls in Britain, the school had to tread carefully between providing a basic education for the girls and attempting to stretch them if it was not to alienate parents and the public

generally. Music was always important at the school and concerts by the girls provided good publicity for the school for a middle-class public which wanted its girls, above all, to be ladies. The musical evenings helped to generate a community spirit at the school. The school was slow to adapt to getting its girls to sit external examinations, although the school's own examinations seemed to have been rigorous enough. Any criticisms of the school's curriculum must be mediated by the type of education which girls in Britain were receiving at the time. Although schools like North London Collegiate and Cheltenham Ladies' College were being set up in the 1850s, many middle-class girls received their education at home from governesses whose abilities varied considerably.

Chapter V has a broader stance than the other chapters and looks at the myth of the missionary heroine as perpetuated by the missionary societies and as it was depicted in popular fiction. Christian sacrifice and service was inextricably bound up in missionary work. Missionaries everywhere risked their lives but diseases like malaria and yellow fever made West Africa very difficult for Europeans, until at least the end of the 19th century so far as malaria was concerned and the 1930s for yellow fever. Women faced the additional complication of pregnancy and birth, difficult enough at home in Victorian Britain but even more so in West Africa. The many deaths there, especially those of women, were a problem for the missionary societies. They could be accused of sending their missionaries to almost certain death in West Africa, although this was not necessarily a deterrent for those who wanted to undertake missionary work. The idea of living and dying for Africa was one which sustained many in their work. The greater the sacrifice, it seemed, the greater the rewards would be afterwards. The missionary societies set about promoting the idea of the missionary heroine, one who for the love of God would sacrifice herself. Her death therefore contributed just as much to the work of the societies as her life. The idea was that some might die so that others might live, in short a sort of recreation of Christ's death on the cross. The societies did this not only through the missionary magazines which enjoyed a wide circulation but also through the publication of stories of missionary heroines and popular biographies.

The Victorian reading public enjoyed reading about heroines such as Grace Darling so the societies were following in an established tradition. If the missionary heroines did not exist then they had to be created. Annie Walsh who gave her name to the first secondary school in West Africa was portrayed as a young woman who met an early death in a tragic accident and who had wanted to be a missionary. The circumstances of her death were much more mundane and there is no evidence that she ever seriously thought about being a missionary. She took an interest in the young girls in her town and this interest was somehow extended to the girls of West Africa.

The missionary heroine had another function. She could be put forward as someone who had special talents and who could be involved in activities which at home would have been unacceptable. Thus her seemingly extraordinary behaviour could be condoned without affecting the moral stance taken at home on women's behaviour. As the pioneering stage passed and the missions became more established, the idea of self-sacrifice made by those early in the field became less acceptable; the idea of the missionary heroine as someone special, someone who had made a superhuman effort, became more important. Popular biographies like those of Edith Warner and Mary Slessor, emphasised what they had achieved in life rather than by their death. This became more necessary as health conditions in West Africa improved thanks to better medical care. However, the occasional death of a West African missionary wife like Nina Castle in 1903 was useful as a salutary reminder that West Africa could still be life-threatening.

Curiously the Victorian public also enjoyed reading the novels which criticised or satirised the very people whom they read about in the missionary press, although not all authors did this. That there was this parody suggests that it was part of the public consciousness.<sup>17</sup> There was a long tradition of criticism of missionaries in novels in the 19th century, starting with Herman Melville and his criticisms of the activities of missionaries, particularly their wives in the South Sea Islands, with Dickens's *Bleak House*, including the enduring character of Mrs. Jellyby, and Trollope's implied view

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara Dennis, *Charlotte Yonge 1823-1901 Novelist of the Oxford Movement* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), p. 99.



that missionary work was a waste of time. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* comes most closely to portraying the idea of the missionary heroine who is prepared to sacrifice her life by going to India but in the end she opts for the more earthly pleasures of being married to Rochester. Criticised by some at the time as being unchristian, the author rejects the idea of the missionary heroine. However she does set out in great detail what she saw as the attributes necessary for a missionary wife and these tied in closely with those put forward by the missionary societies. Many of the authors who criticised the missionaries were using them as a means of criticising what they saw as wrong with contemporary society, especially its cant and its colonial practices.

The missionary societies believed that the function of the missionary heroine was to justify and inspire. The works which they published reflected this view although the emphasis changed over time as self-sacrifice became unacceptable and the heroine was reinvented as someone who had achieved much in her lifetime rather than by just dying for the cause. The 19th century authors that have been discussed mostly rejected this view or satirised it. Were the missionary societies wasting their time then? Probably not since such fiction kept the missionary heroine in the public eye, especially for those who did not subscribe to the missionary magazines.

Missionary encounters with West African women, the theme of Chapter VI, provide insight into the relations between Europeans and Africans. African women could reject completely what the missionaries offered, sometimes because of the society in which they lived refused to accept Christianity or because what the missionaries offered had no appeal. An alternative for African women was to take the parts of the missionary way of life which they found acceptable and to reject the rest. Others accepted the missionary way of life completely, for example, those married to Africans who achieved high office in the church, such as the Bishops and Archdeacons. Missionary attitudes towards African women were ambivalent. At times they were seen as a way in which society could be Christianised and at other times they were seen as completely oblivious to the appeals by missionaries. Caseley Hayford's autobiographical novel written in 1911 in the Gold Coast, where he was a prominent personality, uses an African woman to criticise a missionary for his failure

in social relationships, that is race. She complains that heaven has two ways leading to it, one for the Africans and one for the whites so she thinks heaven must be an undesirable place.<sup>18</sup>

Much of the research into West African women and missionaries relies on the missionary society archives and therefore has to be interpreted carefully, especially in the light of other resources such as local newspapers. Domestic slavery, or more correctly social bondage, and polygyny were issues which particularly affected African women and missionary attitudes on these two subjects were important for women.

The rejection of polygyny by missionaries was also a rejection of local beliefs, beliefs which African women also shared and which were part of traditional African life. Polygyny meant that all women would be able find a husband. A barren wife among several fertile wives was not a problem. Being a first wife gave a woman a position in the household and she might well support her husband's wish to seek further wives since this helped to spread the burden of domestic tasks. Polygyny, however, was seen as alien to the civilisation which the missionaries brought and monogamous marriage as the only form of marriage acceptable for Christians. This resistance to polygyny proved to be a major hindrance to conversion. This was for men rather than women once it was accepted that polygynous wives could become members of the church but not their husbands, that is until they had renounced all but one wife. One result was that husbands who wished to remain in the church and have more than one wife kept the additional wives secret, although this must have given them a less secure position. Provided the practice was not too blatant, the missionaries accepted the situation.

The more educated a woman the more it seemed she insisted on a monogamous marriage so by providing more education for girls the missionary societies were following one way of getting rid of polygyny. The quality of the education which the

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ephraim Caseley Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 86.

missionaries provided has been criticised and it is probably true that most girls received a very limited education. However those schools that received government grants had to maintain minimum standards and stick to government guidelines on the amount of religious teaching which could be provided. There were criticisms that the schools' main aims were to make good wives and mothers out of the girls. The criticisms that the schools did not provide enough by way of industrial training, for example laundry work, suggests that the schools were not so domestically orientated as might have been supposed. The curriculum for the secondary schools suggests that the teaching was designed to give the girls a much broader education, broader even than the education many girls were receiving in Britain.

Whatever education the girls received, the expectation or perhaps the missionary hope, was that they would not take up trading after leaving school. Trading was a traditional occupation for West African women, something which they felt they could combine with bringing up children and running a home. The missionaries saw trading as coarsening women and bringing them into contact with the outside world. The Protestant work ethic to which the missionaries subscribed could not be stretched to include trading. Trading provided women with an income which in turn gave them an independence which the missionaries might have found difficult to deal with. Dressmaking, suggested as an alternative, did not have the same attractions, especially the socialising. However women, even the wives of African ministers, were able to evade the restriction on trading which the missionaries tried to impose. Others were able to manipulate the protection provided by the mission station to their own advantage.

Domestic slavery, which was widely practised in British West Africa for much of the 19th century, bore especially heavily on women and was a problem for missionaries since the colonial authorities were not prepared to interfere with the practice. It could be argued that in practice there was little difference for an African woman in being free and in being a slave as she still had much the same tasks to perform. Domestic slavery in Africa had much to do with conceptions of freedom and individual autonomy. If a woman was freed what was to happen to her, how would she support

herself, especially if she was not in her own country. But the idea of one person being owned by another, being a chattel and however domestic slavery was mediated by local practice, it was not a practice which the missionaries could condone. They were just about able to enforce a ruling that their African ministers could not own slaves, although this was difficult as the ownership was often not clear, but found it near impossible to require their converts to do likewise. An additional problem was that for much of the 19th century waged labour in West Africa did not exist and slavery was seen as the only alternative. For these reasons, whilst missionaries were seen as strongly anti-slavery, a position which helped to secure support at home, they adopted an ambivalent attitude and bided their time waiting for the authorities to take action.

Missionary work was part of the philanthropy which the Victorian middle-class saw as necessary if society was to be improved. Whilst self-help was always preferable, it seemed clear that many would not improve without being given some form of assistance. This was seen as especially true for those living in Africa. Hardening racial attitudes stressed this notion. Whilst these attitudes reinforced sympathy for the benighted African, it also brought the danger that Africans were seen as so inferior that even when educated and civilised they could not be regarded as equals.

Missionaries were no less subject to these views than others in society. Christianity is framed in universal terms which would override ethnicity, nationality, class and income.<sup>19</sup> Christian in outlook missionaries might be but they still remained British and part of the Empire. A necessary step to improvement was the recognition of the essential humanity of the victims rather than their animality.<sup>20</sup> When I began my research, my expectation was that I would find that missionary women and African women would have a great deal in common in that both groups were subject to gender norms and expectations. This did not turn out to be the case. Whilst there was a great deal of sympathy for the lot of the West African women and female missionaries sought many ways to alleviate this, this was mostly as far as it went. There was no

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission At the Grassroots* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> David Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 135.

sense of feeling that ‘Women, like slaves, had been denied individuality, choice and full adulthood.’<sup>21</sup>

Missionary work in the 19th century provided a rare opportunity for men and women not only to work together but also to relate to indigenous men and women in a way which was not necessarily predetermined by the relationship of ruler and ruled. Supporting a husband was the experience of most wives in the 19th century but the missionary life required more from a wife than just being a helpmeet. Both husbands and wives had to adjust to a new relationship in which the wife was able to take initiatives outside of the home which were sanctioned by the missionary societies. The societies supported wives when their position was threatened, for example in managing the Annie Walsh Memorial School. Even when very ill, wives found it difficult to leave their husbands and return home. They were separated from their children for long periods. Many wives, however, found that they enjoyed life in West Africa. When missionary husbands died they often stayed on either to work, usually in running schools which the societies encouraged, or they remarried and stayed on. Part of their reasons for remaining may have been because returning to Europe and being dependent on relatives or seeking a position as companion or governess was not an attractive prospect. Some of the appeal of missionary work for women was that it enabled them to use their talents somewhat less fettered by the constraints of Victorian society.

The arrival of the single female missionary in the last decades of the 19th century was in part a response to the meetings held at Keswick from 1875 onwards, since there were many for whom Keswick’s message led straight to the mission field.<sup>22</sup> In 1905 there was a highly emotional Ladies’ Missionary Meeting at Keswick at which women offered publicly to become missionaries.<sup>23</sup> The arrival of single female

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<sup>21</sup> Christine Bolt, *Feminist Ferment “The Women Question” in the USA and England, 1870-1940* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Neil Porter, ‘Late Nineteenth-Century Anglican Missionary Expansion: A Consideration of Some Non-Anglican Sources of Inspiration’, in *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian* ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 349-365 (p. 358).

<sup>23</sup> J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), p. 125.



missionaries complicated matters even further. For the male missionaries she was a colleague but related more to the wives, part of whose functions she took over. The main justification for the single female missionaries was that she could more easily work with local women. Another reason was that some felt that a missionary wife needed to devote her time to being a wife so the arrival of the single female missionary was in some ways a setback for wives. Her coming, too, contributed to the further secularisation of missionaries. With the fading of the belief in eternal damnation for those who had not been converted, there was less impetus for immediate salvation so that the compassionate work done by female missionaries could be condoned. Medical missions had similarly been resisted in the first half of the 19th century because they were felt to distract from the real task.<sup>24</sup>

The overseas missionary movement was able to attract and retain both those women who caught the public's imagination such as Mary Slessor and also those many more ordinary women who provided much of the impetus for the development of women's work. How far European women provided a role model for West African women must be open to question. Their life styles for the most part were entirely different and from time to time criticisms were made of the way missionaries lived which kept them apart from most of those they came to evangelise.<sup>25</sup> The white woman living in the mission house and seemingly enjoying a freedom to do what she wanted must have seemed a far cry from those African women with families to look after and work to do. Constraints of class and race combined to isolate missionaries from the women they came to serve.<sup>26</sup> The missionaries' sense of spiritual superiority was easily transformed in Africa into a feeling of racial superiority.<sup>27</sup> More important, possibly, were the converted black African women who showed what and what was not available in the missionary approach.

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<sup>24</sup> C. Peter Williams, 'British Religion and the Wider World: Mission and Empire', in *A History of Religion in Britain: practice and belief from pre-Roman times to the present* ed. by Sheridan Gilley & William J. Shiels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp 381-405 (p. 400).

<sup>25</sup> N. C. Sargent, 'The Missionary Controversy, 1889-1891' *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, (1965), 304-310 (p 305).

<sup>26</sup> Sean Gill, 'Heroines of Missionary Adventure: The Portrayal of Victorian Women Missionaries in Popular Fiction and Biography', in *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture* ed. by Anne Hogan & Andrew Bradstock (London, MacMillan, 1998), pp. 172-183 (p 181).

<sup>27</sup> Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.111.

The missionaries, regardless of their gender, came to restructure and reform the indigenous society in which they lived. Conversion on its own was not enough. Through their work they believed that they were championing the dignity and status of West African women. They saw, for example, the Bible classes and sewing classes which they instituted and which were run by female missionaries as more than compensating for the activities which they condemned and which they considered to be uncivilised. Whilst missionaries helped to remove some of the taboos and restrictions which local customs imposed on African women, these were replaced by Christian practices which, it can be argued, were equally restrictive. The highest office which African women could achieve in the church in West Africa was that of class leader. Like female missionaries, they could not be ordained. Their role, too, in church affairs was undervalued. From helping to start churches to keeping them going and to providing gifts to embellish them, theirs was an important but understated role. Their needs so far as domestic slavery and polygyny were concerned took second place in the missionary order of what the societies wanted to achieve. So far as the missionaries were concerned, they had to be taught to be women since the evangelicals believed they had a monopoly on morality.<sup>28</sup>

Without women the missions in West Africa would have achieved far less. A detailed investigation into what they did and how they did it has shown how central they were to the missionary concept as it developed in the 19th century and more generally contributed to the question of how women were to be treated. Women helped both to pioneer missionary work and to consolidate it. My research has shown, for example, how involved they were in providing secondary education for African girls beginning at a time when few girls in Britain were educated to secondary level. Those who were taught were potential converts and examples of converted Africans were necessary if the missions were to advance. Women were instrumental in developing new working patterns with their male colleagues which they seemed to negotiate in a way satisfactory to both parties. This set a new pattern in which men and women worked

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<sup>28</sup> Modupe Labode, 'From Heathen Kraal to Christian Home: Anglican Mission Education of African Christian Girls, 1850-1900', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present* ed. by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood & Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 126-144 (p. 129).



together and was reflected in the status which women enjoyed both within the local community and at the missionary societies' headquarters. African women were intended to imitate women missionaries who set a practical example whilst the male missionaries could only preach about the godliness which they felt African women needed. My research has led me to conclude that I agree with Chief Henry Cobham of Old Calabar (see Chapter III) when he said 'I tell you true, them women be best man for mission.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> William Marwick, *William and Louisa Anderson* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1891), p. 591.

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FO 881/4141 Dispute between the British Consul and the CMS at Lagos  
CO 445/24 Despatches relating to the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Southern Nigeria  
CO 520/31 Details of a journey by the High Commissioner from Lagos to Calabar, staying with a CMS missionary en route.

##### **Accra** (Public Records and Archives Administration Department - PRAAD)

EC1/78 Presbyterian Church Papers, Kibi  
EC.6.1 Aboki and the Basel Mission (Compiled by H. Debrunner from old Mission publications and yearly accounts)  
EC.6.2 Digest of Basel Mission Archives on Ghana 1828-51  
EC.6.3 Digest of articles on Ghana in Basel Mission periodicals 1828-51  
EC.7/18 & 19 Christiansborg Presbyterian Middle Board School Papers 1892-1901  
SC 23/1-728 Mrs. Bartells' Collection  
SCT 2/5/12 Criminal Record Book Vol. 9 1895-7  
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Commissioner Madden's Report on Slavery 1841

##### **Belfast** (Public Records Office of Northern Ireland - PRONI)

See below under Qua Iboe Missionary Society

### Missionary Archives

#### **Church Missionary Society**

The archives of the CMS are held in the Special Collections Department of the University of Birmingham. Adam Matthew Publications have microfilmed the following records relating to the CMS Africa Missions:

Part 1: West Africa (Sierra Leone), 1803-1880  
Part 2: West Africa (Sierra Leone), 1820-1880  
Part 3: Nigeria - Yoruba, 1844-1880  
Part 4: Nigeria - Yoruba, 1844-1880  
Part 5: West Africa (Sierra Leone), 1820-1880  
Part 6: Nigeria - Niger, 1857-1882

The Listing and Guide produced by Adam Matthew Publications gives detailed information about the files on each reel of microfilm. I have used the microfilm for all my research regarding the CMS up to 1880 and for anything after that date I used

the records held in Birmingham. The microfilm was made available to me at the CMS Library, Partnership House, Waterloo Road, London SE1.

Below is a list of the files to which I have referred in the thesis, indicating whether I used the Matthew Adam microfilm or at the records of the Birmingham Special Collection.

#### Adam Matthew Publications

CA1 E1 Early Correspondence 1803-1808 Reel 1  
CA1 E2 Early Correspondence 1808-1812 Reel 2  
CA1 E7 Early Correspondence 1818-1819 Reel 7  
CA1 E7A Early Correspondence 1816-1819 Reel 7  
CA1 L1 Letter Book 1820-1824 Reel 9  
CA1 L2 Letter Book 1824-1835 Reel 9  
CA1 L8 Letter Book 1865-1873 Reel 12  
CA1 L9 Letter Book 1873-1883 Reel 12  
CA1 M2 Mission Book 1826-1828 Reel 14  
CA1 M4 Mission Book 1826-1828 Reel 15  
CA1 M6 Mission Book 1831-1834 Reel 16  
CA1 M12 Mission Book 1845-1846 Reel 20  
CA1 M13 Mission Book 1846-1848 Reel 21  
CA1 M14 Mission Book 1848-52 Reel 22  
CA1 M16 Mission Book 1857-1862 Reel 24  
CA1 M17 Mission Book 1868-1870 Reel 25  
CA1 M19 Mission Book 1873-1874 Reel 26  
CA1 M21 Mission Book 1877-78 Reel 27  
CA1 038 Papers of Mrs Beale 1856-1866 Reel 40  
CA1 095 Original Papers - Missionaries Miss Annie Freymuth 1860-1965 Reel 81  
CA1 0114 Original Papers - Missionaries Miss M Sophia Hehlen 1847-1851, 1958 Reel 83  
CA1 0167 Original Papers - Missionaries Miss Anne and Miss Hannah Nylander 1823, 1832-1833 Reel 89  
CA1 0187 Original Papers of Miss Julia Sass 1849-1869 Reel 92

#### Special Collections, University of Birmingham (1880 onwards)

G3 A/1/0 West Africa Mission Original Papers  
G3 A1 L West Africa Mission Letter Book  
G3 A/2/0 Yoruba Mission Original Papers  
G3 A2 L Yoruba Mission Letter Book  
G3 A/3/0 Niger Mission Original Papers  
GA A3 L Niger Mission Letter Book  
C/C/1 and 2 Candidates' Committee  
CY 1 Candidates' Committee - Correspondence with Overseas Candidates  
CMS Unofficial Papers Acc 4 Journals of Frances Dennis  
Published Extracts from Annual Letters of Missionaries

#### **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society**

These archives are held on microfilm at the Special Collections Department of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

West African Correspondence - Gambia and Sierra Leone  
Gold Coast  
Lagos

Synod Minutes - Gambia 1851-1919  
Gold Coast 1842-1918  
Nigeria 1878-1918  
Sierra Leone 1822-1918

Women's Work Collection, Ladies'/Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS:-  
Papers for 1863-1893  
Minutes 1858-1918

### **Basel Mission Society**

These archives are held at the Society's headquarters in Basel, Switzerland.

D-1 Incoming Correspondence from Ghana 1829-1914

Also useful was the ASUAK microfilm of the Basel Mission's Ghana Archive. Reels 129 and 130 have summaries in English of German MS materials held in the archives.

### **Qua Iboe Mission Society**

These archives are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast.

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**An Outline of the History of the Selected Missionary Societies Involved in British West Africa in the Nineteenth-Century**

The main societies working in British West Africa, excluding the Catholic ones which are discussed in Chapter I, were the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the Basel Mission Society, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Qua Oboe Missionary Society. The CMS was present in the Gambia, Sierra Leone and what was to become Nigeria as was the WMMS which was also active in the Gold Coast. In British West Africa the Basel Mission had a presence in the Gold Coast only (until 1917) whilst the United Presbyterian Church (also in the Gold Coast from 1917) and the Qua Iboe Mission Society were in Nigeria only. In 1915 there were twenty-nine missionary Protestant societies in West Africa and some of the other missionary societies are also briefly considered. At that time the largest was the Basel Mission with 79 personnel followed by the CMS with 75.

The CMS was part of the evangelical awakening of the 18th century. This emphasised the sinfulness of human beings and their justification by faith in the work of Christ on the cross; the need for conversion of each individual; the supreme authority of the Bible as God's word; and an activism when inspired by God's spirit.<sup>1</sup> Its work in West Africa began in 1804 in Sierra Leone.

The CMS had been aware of the contribution which women could make to its work almost from its inception in 1799. Melville Horne gave a sermon in 1811 in which he addressed 'Christian Matrons'.<sup>2</sup> He appealed to them to be mothers and missionaries and 'to tell the missionary tale to your little ones'. In 1815 three ladies from Clifton, Bristol offered themselves to the CMS but their offer was declined. The CMS decided that it was unwilling to send unmarried women abroad except as sisters

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Ward, 'Taking Stock: The CMS and its Historians', in *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity* ed. by Kevin Ward & Brian Stanley (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 15-42 (p. 21).

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Stock. *History of the Church Missionary Society* 4 vols (London: CMS, 1899 & 1915), I p. 168.

accompanying or joining their brothers. In the years 1820-59 the CMS sent out 53 single women missionaries of whom seventeen went to West Africa as teachers. The CMS discussed the possibility of women candidates in 1859. The Rev. Pennefeather wanted to train ladies at an institution he proposed opening. The CMS replied sympathetically without making any commitment. It again decided in 1863 not to use women as missionaries except under very special circumstances.

From 1887 onwards a trickle of women began to be accepted for CMS work overseas. In April 1887 the CMS agreed to send three women missionaries to East Africa at the urging of Bishop Parker. The response to the advertisement in the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* was immediate and the three chosen sailed on 7th July of that year. In total seventeen women went out in the first round, ten at their own expense. Between 1887 and 1894 214 women were recruited for the CMS. The 1894 Anglican Missionary Conference had a separate women's section, arranged by a Ladies' Committee.<sup>3</sup> The subjects discussed included the vocation and training of women for foreign missions and the dangers and difficulties of women missionaries. In 1895 a new women's department was set up to look after all the work being done by women in connection with the CMS at home and abroad. Miss Gollock, previously in the editorial department of the CMS, became the secretary. Conferences on women's work were held on a regular basis with the one in 1898 being addressed by Archbishop Temple. The number of women on the CMS roll (excluding wives) rose from 22 in 1887 to 193 in 1894. Numbers of men also rose but the increase for women was much more significant. Jocelyn Murray has suggested that women missionaries were accepted earlier and more extensively in the CMS than in other missionary societies.<sup>4</sup> The increase in numbers of recruits for all missionary societies was partly brought about by 'the theological perfectionism' resulting from the yearly Keswick Convention.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid III p. 653.

<sup>4</sup> Jocelyn Murray, 'Women in Mission in the 19th Century', in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity 1799-1999* ed. by Kevin Ward, & Brian Stanley (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp.67-90 (p. 88).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Cox, 'The Missionary Movement', in *Nineteenth Century English Religious Traditions: Retrospect and Prospect* ed. by D. G. Paz (London, Greenwood, 1995), pp. 197-220 (p. 208).

The increase in the number of women missionaries resulted in more consideration being given to their training. Two private undertakings took most of the women with a good education enrolled by the CMS as candidates. These were The Willows, the training home connected with the Mildmay Institution and established in 1888, and The Olives, a private training home, established 1895. Some experienced ladies went to the Deaconess House at Great Yarmouth. The CMS opened the Highbury home in 1891 for the less educated woman with all expenses met by the CMS.

Missionary activity has traditionally been an important part of the work of Methodists. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society dates formally from 1813 when there were 13 missions. Two-thirds were stationed in the West Indies and the others in Gibraltar and British North America. West Africa came to be seen as an area where Christianity and Islam came into conflict and therefore important for the work of the WMMS. In 1842 Thomas Birch Freeman was sent out by the WMMS and he did much to extend its remit in the Gold Coast and also in the Yoruba area. In 1863, its jubilee year, the WMMS had 25 missionaries in three districts which extended along the coast from the River Gambia to Lagos, sometimes reaching one hundred miles inland. £180,000 was raised for the building of a new theological college to train missionary candidates in addition to those at Richmond and Didsbury. The money raised in the jubilee year was also used to provide pensions for missionaries, their widows and their orphaned children. The WMMS income rose from £20,000 a year to £180,000 in 1905. However there were times when income declined, particularly in the last quarter of the 19th century when there was a feeling that more should be done at home. Also there were secessions from the Methodists and the WMMS income shrank. The WMMS was always an integral part of Wesleyan Methodism, whereas the CMS developed outside of the Church of England or almost in spite of it.

The Women's Auxiliary of the WMMS was formed in 1858. The WMMS was one of the earliest missionary societies to create a separate organisation for women and the contribution by women to the work of the WMMS was acknowledged from early on. 'From the outset Methodist women have played an indispensable part in the actual



[missionary] service.’<sup>6</sup> The Wesleyans had a tradition of using women since they retained ministering functions up to quarterly meeting level and this may have created a more receptive attitude towards women’s missionary activities.

It has been suggested that women’s greatest help was found in an exhibition of Christian domestic life shedding the light of ‘a sure, gentle, beneficent womanhood amid the loathsomeness of heathen society’.<sup>7</sup> Precisely how this was to be achieved is not clear but it would seem that woman’s role excluded public advocacy of the missionary cause nor were they to be involved in the administration of the WMMS. Their main role in the early years of the WMMS, at least, was raising funds which they did in a variety of ways including house to house appeals, working meetings and bazaars. Perhaps half of the income raised for missionary activities came from women.<sup>8</sup> The Women’s Auxiliary was intended to stand alone, as a sister organisation of the WMMS, rather than being controlled from the centre. In practice most of the women involved were related to men closely involved with the work of the WMMS so there are grounds for assuming that there was a considerable mutual understanding of what the Auxiliary should or should not do. Nevertheless it did on occasions make its independence clear.

From the outset the Auxiliary acknowledged the considerable work which the wives of missionaries carried out but considered that to be a wife and to carry out missionary functions was an intolerable burden. It wanted women to be sent out specifically as teachers. The Auxiliary’s income in 1859, the first full year of its existence, was £320. In 1909, its jubilee year, the income was £27,200, part of which it used to provide pensions for women. During its first fifty years the Auxiliary had extended its Zenana visiting greatly, established girls’ boarding schools in Ceylon, South Africa and South India, opened orphanages in South India and expanded its day schools. The first medical missionaries were sent out in the 1880s.

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<sup>6</sup> George Gillanders Findlay & William West Holdsworth, *History of The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 5 vols (London: SPCK, 1922), IV p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

In 1878 the Auxiliary was revitalised by the appointment of a new foreign secretary, Mrs. Wiseman. She raised the Auxiliary's profile and under her direction it played a part in the public functions of the May missionary festival and the WMMS annual conference. In 1887 for the first time the Auxiliary dispensed with the services of a spokesman at the annual missionary conference and two ladies took the platform. Although the Auxiliary selected its own candidates to go overseas, once there they were there they were under the direction of the local missionary.

The Basel Mission Society owes its origins to the German Society for Christianity which was created in Basel in 1780 as a Bible study and discussion group, bringing together various Swiss and German clergymen, community leaders, business owners and academic theologians.<sup>9</sup> The German Society was part of the pietist movement which was active in Europe from the 17th century. Pietism has been described as 'an emotionally intense set of beliefs that emphasised spiritual rebirth, reading of the Scriptures, personal asceticism, discipline and social conservatism'.<sup>10</sup> The Basel Mission Society itself was founded in 1815 with the intention of training men who would work overseas for other missionary societies.<sup>11</sup> The first students were accepted in 1816 and sent as missionaries in 1824. Before the CMS had started its own college in Islington, London, it sent men to be trained in Basel.

Work by the Basel Mission began in the Gold Coast in 1828, in India in 1834 and in China in 1847. Four missionaries went to Christiansborg on the Gold Coast (then under the control of the Danes). Three died in 1829 and the fourth in 1831. A further three missionaries were sent out in 1832 but only one survived, Riis, and it was he who established the base inland in Akropong from which the Basel Mission was to work. Riis had gone out unmarried but a wife was found for him, Ann Walter, described as 'a person of singular humility and modesty and of childlike devoted faith in her Saviour'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jon Miller, *Evangelical Missions and Social Change: The Social control of Religious Zeal: a study of organizational contradictions* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Jenkins, *A Short History of the Basel Mission* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Church Missionary Intelligencer* November 1874 p. 347.

Riis's recruits in Jamaica and Antigua included George Thompson, an African from Liberia. In the 1840s the Basel missionaries plus those from the West Indies began to make an impact. The centrepiece of the Mission's Gold Coast strategy was an attempt to bring Africans into economically self-sufficient villages and whose success was to be the beacon for leading the remaining 'heathens out of their darkness'.<sup>13</sup> This implied setting up farms, factories and even breweries. A separate organisation was created to carry out the trading activities. Each congregation was expected to be self-supporting.

A report published by the Basel Mission in 1879 on its activities in the Gold Coast over the previous fifty years provides an insight into how far the Mission had developed by then.<sup>14</sup> There were then thirty-four missionaries, twenty wives and fifteen female teachers (Appendix III of the report). The Basel Mission was expelled from the Gold Coast in 1917 because of its German nationals and its role taken over by the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

In 1842 a Women's Mission committee was started but when it tried to develop its own policies it was rapidly called to order and confined to a supportive role. Haas has suggested that many Basel missionaries were uncomfortable with unmarried women being sent to work with them and the mission leadership felt insecure when dealing with independent, unmarried women. Haas has commented how difficult it was for women in the Basel Mission in the 19th century, how much the wife was seen as a helpmeet and how long it was before single women came to be accepted.<sup>15</sup> The Women's Committee was abolished in 1895 but re-established in 1901 although of its ten members, the President and Secretary were men. New branches were established in a number of towns, suggesting that women were waiting for their opportunity to serve in a specific role of promoting women missionaries. In 1915 the functions of

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<sup>13</sup> Jon Miller, *Evangelical Missions and Social Change. The Social Control of Religious Zeal: a study of organizational contradictions* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> Basel Mission, *The Basel Mission on the Gold Coast on the 1st January 1879* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1879), Appendix III.

<sup>15</sup> Waltraud Haas, *Women Carry More Than Half The Burden* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1996), p. 14.

the Women's Missions Committee was reduced to an advisory role in the selection and training of women. It was not until 1911 that a 'sisters' house' was inaugurated to provide training for women (to complement that for men).

Missionary activity in Scotland dates from 1796 when missionary societies were formed in Edinburgh and Glasgow to be followed by similar associations in other Scottish towns. This development seems to have been the result of the church of Scotland at its 1796 Assembly deciding not to support missionary activity. The Church was to reverse this decision in 1824. Missionaries were sent to Sierra Leone in 1797 but this attempt ended in failure in 1800. It is interesting to note that the Missionary Magazine in 1797 queried why women were excluded from missionary activity.<sup>16</sup> Formal training for missionaries began in 1821. In the same year a Ladies' Auxiliary Society was formed in Lanark which ultimately became the Women's Foreign Mission of the Church. In 1839 societies were founded by ladies in Edinburgh and Glasgow for advancing female education in India. In 1847 the Scottish missionaries came under the control of the newly formed United Presbyterian church which raised large sums for missionary work e. g. £49,214 in 1848-9.<sup>17</sup> As part of this fund-raising effort mission workboxes were filled by enthusiastic women to be sold for funds.

Missionaries had been sent to Jamaica from 1800 and it was from here that the first Scottish missionaries went to Old Calabar in 1846 under the Rev. Hope Waddell with his wife and family joining him in 1849 together with a Rev. Thompson and a Miss Euphemia Miller. From then on there was a steady increase in the number of missionaries accompanied by their wives. In 1855 the first medical missionaries were sent out together with two single ladies to work among African women. The Scottish women who went to Old Calabar seem to have been particularly notable for their resilience and zealousness. The missionaries were particularly concerned about the killing of twins and other local practices which they found unacceptable. It had been

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<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Glendinning Kirkwood Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956: A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches United in the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

the practice of widows to remain hidden until the funeral rites of their husbands had been completed. In 1868 the widows revolted against this and the custom was abolished. The missionaries were very much involved in this move. In 1868 a treaty with the King and Chiefs of Duke town, Old Calabar put an end to practices such as human sacrifice and the murder of twins. This marked the culmination of efforts by the missionaries to outlaw such practices. In 1895 the Hope Waddell Training Institute for boys was set up to be followed by a similar one for girls.

The Qua Iboe River between the Old Calabar River and the Niger was an area of many small fishing towns. The people in the region had come into contact with Christians in Calabar through trading. There had been religious instruction by a European merchant in the region and this had led to a request for a missionary which came to Harley College, a missionary centre in London, inspired by Moody and Sankey. Samuel A. Bill, a student there, had responded to this call. He had been involved in home mission work in Ulster but felt the need to go overseas, possibly encouraged by his mother who had always intended that he serve God. The Qua Iboe Mission in the 19th century at least is the story of this man and his wife. He left England in 1887 for Old Calabar after his passage money and initial expenses were paid by a lady but he had no assured support from a home base. He settled among the Ibuno tribe in a house donated by the agent of the Liverpool African Company. The Ibunos were animists but believed in the 'Great God'. From 1891 he was joined by his wife, Gracie, who had trained at Doric Lodge, a women's missionary training college connected with Harley College. In 1890 a council was formed for the support of the new mission, framed on evangelical and inter-denominational lines. In 1899 the Qua Iboe Missionary Association was set up by people associated with the Island Street Mission, Belfast which Samuel Bill had attended.

In 1894 the mission set up an industrial training centre and the following years marked a gradual advance in the work of the mission with more missionaries joining, including a number of unmarried women who are referred not as missionaries but as women workers. In 1904 a training institute for boys was set up and in 1907 a similar school for girls. Eventually there were nine on the staff of the mission but usually a

number of these were on leave. They served an area about one-third the size of Ireland with a population of around one million. The mission trained a number of African pastors. Gracie Bill did much to foster the work of the mission. In a book published in 1977 she is described as 'strong in faith, fervent in spirit and clear in vision'.<sup>18</sup> She appears to have been a more eloquent speaker than her husband and played an active role in promoting the cause of the Qua Iboe Mission on her visits home. By 1924 there were nine mission stations with twenty-seven European missionaries.

Other missionary societies were active in British West Africa and some of these are now discussed more briefly. The Southern Baptists of the United States were active from 1849 in the Yorubaland when one missionary settled in Abeokuta. Later several centres opened but, due to illness and the American Civil War, these had almost ceased to operate by the 1870s. These were then reopened and the Baptists were particularly strong in Lagos. In 1913 there were 31 Baptist churches with nearly 3,000 members.<sup>19</sup> The Primitive Methodists began work in Fernando Po in 1870 and were active from 1894 in southern Nigeria. They developed a fairly extensive mission, including a girls' training institution at Jamestown in the Gold Coast in which the London Women's Missionary Society took a special interest.<sup>20</sup> The Dutch Reformed Mission entered Northern Nigeria in 1911 and the Danish Lutheran Society in 1913.

In Northern Nigeria, the Governor-General, Lord Lugard laid down that there should be no interference with established religion and he wanted missionaries to be mainly concerned with areas where indigenous religion flourished to avoid Muslim areas. In 1893 the Sudan Interior Mission with headquarters in Canada began work in Northern Nigeria. In 1904 the Sudan United mission (initially called the Sudan Pioneer Mission) and the Mennonites also established themselves there as did the Seventh day

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<sup>18</sup> Jean Corbett, *According to Plan* (Worthing: Henry E. Walter, 1977), p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* 7 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1937), V p. 441.

<sup>20</sup> John Petty, *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: John Dickinson, 1860), pp. 294 & 296.

Adventists.<sup>21</sup> The Society for the Propagation of the Bible (SPG) started work in the Gold Coast in 1902. It employed a number of women, overseen by the Committee of Women's work. They served terms of six years overseas. The rules of conduct dated January 1906 regulated their conduct closely including minimum hours of rest and specified a uniform dress of grey, white or blue.<sup>22</sup>

The Women's Missionary Association (WMA) of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (UBC) was started in 1875. It was not to be an auxiliary of the UBC but to maintain close co-operation although independent in its functions and subject only to the General Conference of the UBC. In 1877 the WMA opened a mission at Rotifunk in Sierra Leone which came under the direction of Mary and Joseph Gomer, a African-American couple. It occupied 100 acres with a mission house and chapel.<sup>23</sup> Much of this was destroyed in the Hut Tax Uprisings in 1898. Seven WMA missionaries were killed - five women (including two doctors) and two men. After this closer co-operation developed between the WMA and the Foreign Missionary Society of the UBC which also had a base in Sierra Leone. In 1909 the two bodies agreed to work even more closely together in what was in effect a take-over by the UBC.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, op. cit., p. 442.

<sup>22</sup> PRAAD documents EC 3/2 *Letters of Bishop Hamlyn 1904-1909: SPG Women's Work Regulations for Women Missionaries, January 1906.*

<sup>23</sup> S. S. Hough, *Faith That Achieved: A History of the Women's Missionary Association of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ 1872-1946* (Dayton: Women's Society of the World Service of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1958), p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 33.



## Appendix II

### Main Missionary Societies Active in British West Africa at the Beginning of the Twentieth-Century

#### Protestant Missionary Societies

Church Missionary Society  
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society  
United Presbyterian Church of Scotland  
Qua Iboe Missionary Society  
Basel Mission Society  
Southern Baptist Convention of the United States  
Primitive Methodist Missionary Society  
United Methodist Reform Society  
Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion  
American Missionary Association  
United Brethren in Christ Church  
Society of Friends  
Seventh Day Adventists  
Good News Missionary Society  
Dutch Reformed Mission  
Danish Lutheran Society  
Bremen Mission  
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel  
Sudan United Mission

#### Catholic Missionary Societies

Society of African Missions  
Holy Ghost Fathers  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny  
Our Lady of Apostles

**Magazines of Missionary Societies Active in British West Africa**

**Church Missionary Society**

Church Missionary Intelligencer 1849-1906\*  
Church Missionary Review 1907-1927\*  
Church Missionary Gleaner 1841-1921\*  
Church Missionary Record 1830-1890  
Yoruba and Niger Notes 1893 onwards  
Quarterly Paper & Token  
Quarterly Token (for Sunday Schools)  
The Juvenile Instructor (for children of the educated class) 1844-1890  
Awake (for working class children) 1891-1921  
Mercy and Truth

**Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society**

Reports of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the WMMS 1859-1932\*  
Women's Work on the Mission Field 1899-1920\*  
Wesleyan Missionary Notices, Work and Workers\*  
The Methodist Missionary Magazine and Chronicle  
WMMS Reports 1818-1932  
The Foreign Field 1908-1932\*  
At Home and Abroad 1874-1974\*

**United Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission**

United Presbyterian Missionary Record 1846-1900\*  
Women's Missionary Magazine 1901-1921\*

**Basel Missionary Society**

Der Evangelische Heidenbote (The Evangelical Heathen Messenger) Monthly 1828 onwards\*

**Qua Iboe Missionary Society**

Qua Iboe Mission Quarterly 1904 onwards\*

**United Methodist Free Church**

Missionary Echo 1894-1907

**Society for the Propagation of the Gospel**

Mission Field (monthly)  
Grain of Mustard Seed (Women's Association Monthly) 1881-98, then replaced by  
Women in the Mission Field 1899-1902  
The Gospel Missionary (for children, monthly) 1852-1902

**Society of Friends**

Worker at Home and Abroad

**Sudan United Mission**

Lightbearer 1905 onwards

**Primitive Methodist Missionary Society**

The Herald 1905-1922

**Others**

The International Review of Missions 1911 onwards\*

Mission Life 1866-1890

Coral Missionary Magazine (previously Children's Missionary Magazine) 1860-1894

**American Missionary Societies - Women's Boards**

Women's Evangel 1881-1918 (United Brethren in Christ)

Helping Hands 1873 onwards (Baptist)

Light and Life for Women 1869-1922 (Congregational)

Mission Gleaner 1883-1917 (Reformed Church)

Missionary Link 1861 onwards (Women's Union Missionary Society)

Missionary Tidings 1883-1919 (Christian Women's Board)

Missionary Helper 1878-1919 (Free Baptist)

Women's Missionary Advocate 1880-1910 (Methodist Episcopal)

Women's Missionary Friend 1869-1946 (Methodist)

Women's Missionary Magazine 1887-1956 (Methodist)

Women's Missionary Record 1885-1925 (Methodist)

Women's Work 1871 -1924 (Presbyterian)

\*Those magazine marked with an asterisk have been read, at least in part - see the bibliography for further details. The Missionary Periodicals Database at the University of Cambridge has been useful in compiling this list, particularly for dates of publication. It contains much helpful information, although covering Britain only.

Advertising for Missionary Contacts

In an attempt to contact people who had female relations working in West Africa in the 19th century and who might have some information which they were willing to share, I had announcements made about my research in the following newspapers and magazines:-

Yes - Church Mission Society Magazine

Church Times

The Grapevine - Official Newspaper of the Bath and Wells Diocese

The Sarum Link - The Church of England in the Diocese of Salisbury

Diocesan News - Diocese of Sheffield

The Three Crowns - Diocesan News from Bristol to Swindon

The Winchester Way - Newspaper for the Winchester Diocese

The Methodist Recorder

The result was some half dozen responses of which two were useful. One person responded whose great aunt, a teacher, went to Yorubaland in 1889 with the CMS. She married the Rev. Melville Jones who then went out to run the CMS Training Institution at Oyo, Yorubaland and who was later Bishop of Lagos. It would seem that she was instrumental in persuading her husband to become a missionary. The other interesting response was from Sue Ladipo in South Malling who was researching into the life of Sarah Warburton buried in the local churchyard. She married Thomas Heighway, a CMS missionary, who died shortly after arriving in Sierra Leone in 1827. She remained in Sierra Leone and subsequently married the Rev. John Warburton, another missionary in Sierra Leone. They returned to England in 1850 when Mrs. Warburton was 59. She died at the age of 78.

A Memoir of Mrs. F. Bultmann, formerly Lina Wilkens  
By the Revd. F. Bultmann

My dear Brethren

Kent, Sierra Leone, September 1845

It has pleased the Lord to convert my earthly happiness into days of deep mourning and bitter woe. In a day He has taken from me all that made Earth desirable, yea, her who was dearer, far dearer to me than life itself; the friend of my bosom, whose daily counsel was no less useful to me than sweet [word omitted?], and whose happiness and love were all my earthly riches! And yet I dare not repine: knowing that when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world;” and that “if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with children.” This, Brethren, is my stay under the sorest of all earthly afflictions: God’s gracious purpose in it; and these are my comforts; the innumerable promise, in His holy word to those who by His grace endure such trials; but above all, the well founded assurance of a happy reunion with my dearest Lina, at no distant time in Heaven.

It now affords me a melancholy pleasure, to think and speak of my departed treasure, therefore a few words of her life and death: Mrs. Bultmann was born in Bremen on the 13th Jan 1820. Her whole life acquainted with it and with her, like myself, is a beautiful illustration of Scripture passages like the following: that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience hope,” which maketh not ashamed; that, “whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth”, that “all things work together for the good of them that love God” In her 6th year already she lost her dear father, and only three years after, her sorrowing mother. She received a very good education, however, in one of the best schools in Bremen, and was confirmed by the Rev. Pastor Mallet, whose excellent religious instruction (with the exception of 2 years absence in Prussia) she had attended weekly, since her Mother’s death in 1829. She early received a practical turn of mind and became passionately fond of belles lettres reading, her choicest authors were, Walter Scott and Goldsmith; Chamissa Korner and Steffen; and Mrs. Sherewood, Hannah More and Grace Kennedy and many such like. This did not, however, make her remiss in attending to more useful studies: for, partly from her diligent application when at School; though still more from the quickness of her observation and an untiring readiness to improve every conversation and society she mixed with, by enriching her knowledge: there were few subjects of general interest on which she had not formed her own ideas. In natural history, for example, though she was little acquainted with the classification of Linne, she knew the names and properties of a vast number of plants and herbs; and she knew as well how the rude ore of various metals is purified and whence extracted; as, from her early fondness for mythology she knew whence came the names of Cylla and Charybdis, Coelius and Tellus, with all their host; and those with all our weekday names. But little indeed would such knowledge have availed her now, had she not possessed the most useful and most necessary of all, that of her most useful and most necessary of all, that of her Saviour, and her heart. She was one of those who are trained and grow up from a child “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”. But

she became rich in experience and gained an uncommon steadiness of character by the various trying situations in which providence had lined out her path; It is a custom in Bremen for daughters of the middle and even higher class of society to serve a sort of apprenticeship, in order to become practically and minutely acquainted with all household affairs and for this object no family suits the Parents and Guardians than where there are a number of children and domesticks and where work is never at an end. My dear Lina, being an orphan, came rather early into several such situations; and it was here that she learnt what trials and what they avail the disciple of Christ, who, by His grace had learned to improve them for good. One whole year in particular she had to endure very much from the capricious temper of her mistress; and it was then she learnt in deed and truth how "tribulation worketh patience" etc. But so heartily had she forgiven this Lady, that she could not hear me express (whenever in Bremen) the least indignation at her treatment; nor was it less cheering to find that by her uniform aim to overcome evil with good, and to thus to heap coals of fire on the head of her mistress she had not only softened her temper, but so effectually won her heart, that ere we left Bremen that lady vied with the best of our friends in showing kindness and love to my dearest Lina.

Under all her trials Lina had not lost her innate love for poetry, but her most favourite author now became such as Spitta, than whom no one has written more sweetly on affliction, patience, hope, resignation and other Christian virtues though to my own mind, my Lina has written as sweetly herself on various subjects. From even her 12th year, down to the present, she has composed occasional small pieces of poetry, all of which I intend (D.V.) to get printed in Bremen, together with a more comprehensive memoir of her life, for the exclusive use of her very numerous friends. I would gladly introduce a few specimens here of her sweet manner of writing did I not fear they would lose too much by translation. Some lines, however, which, with others, she wrote after a most afflictive disappointment in winter, 1839, will give an idea of her sweet temper in the greatest trials and her heaven-bent spirit. She wrote like this: "Help me, Lord! to bear this affliction far too great for me; Let me not despair, Gracious Saviour! hold me nigh to Thee. Open, Lord! my eyes, let me see Thy wisdom in my way; Let me know aright, Why Thou has chastened me from day to day; Teach me, Lord! to fight, Be my Captain, guide me with Thy Law; Animate my sight, By unfolding yonder Fatherland."

Having been on terms of intimacy from our childhood, and having at no time regarded each other with indifference; it was but a few days after my arrival in Bremen from Africa (3rd Dec. 1842) that I entered into a matrimonial engagement with my own dearest Lina. Our marriage took place 5 months after (3rd May 1842). Heart rending as the separation was from so many affectionate friends, Mrs Bultmann bore it with truly Christian fortitude. Having travelled along the Rhine and over Switzerland (without returning to Bremen) arrived in London on 10th of Aug; we sailed for Africa on the 18th Sept following, and arrived in Freetown on 3rd of Nov. anno (1843) Mrs B. was never seasick, but daily occupied in study and work. We went to Kent, our appointed station, on 18th Nov; and on the 26th Dec. she was prematurely delivered of a daughter, that lived but 12 hours, and cost her fond mother many a sorrowful tear. The following 18 months was the only time Mrs. Bultmann was permitted to realize those hopes of usefulness in Africa, which her heart had

fondly cherished for years. But I hesitate not to say, that owing to the daily opportunities for extensive usefulness, and her unremitting watchfulness to improve them all by the most disinterested exertions and, owing above all to the extensive daily influence of her very admirable and truly Christian Example: the last 18 months of her life have probably rendered more effectual service in the Redeemer's Kingdom on Earth than in a less prominent station of life, she might have been able to render for many years in Europe (Like Hannah More) It never was her object to teach dogmas and opinions; but to train up good members of Society, and plain practical Christians: to make the daughters of our Parish more industrious and useful, to instil into their minds the Love of Christ, as the purest motive for the exercise of Christian virtues in short to ameliorate and guide, both their unseemly habits and their untutored intellects; were the main and daily efforts of Mrs B's ever watchful mind. With uncommon regularity she instructed a limited number of the elder School girls, 4 days a week for 1hr 30 mins, in reading, writing, cyphering, etc., and above all in Religion, and 5 days per week, a much larger number for 2 hours, in sewing, mending, hemming, knitting, etc. nor did she after sufficient warning allow any of the girls to appear in torn frocks, etc.; but where she found that they had but one to put on, being either orphans or the children of sick parents, she would not let a day pass without having another made for them at school. This she did in particular for poor widows, and their children. And in order to know their necessities and manner of life, she very frequently accompanied me to their houses, and was always glad to go with me, when visiting the sick and the dying. With the exception of some weekdays, when duty interfered, we took a daily walk towards evening, either for visits in, or recreation out of town, But, though both our inclination and health mostly demanded the latter; yet there were so frequent occasions for calls and inquiries; that my dear Lina would mostly give her vote for the former, Never, at least, would she let inclination interfere with an urgent call, or other plain duty.

Till last Good Friday, when they were admitted to the Sacrament we had a small number of Creole female candidates for the Lord's supper with us every Friday from Tea time (7) till Evening Prayer and few hours were spent more in unison with her hearts desire, than there. Together with our domestics (on that evening) they sat around our table; and when my hour's instruction was given; my dear Lina would always continue to interest and entertain them by the most instructive conversation till 9 o'clock, when they joined in our evening family prayer. In mentioning prayers I am anxious to record her never ceasing faithfulness in reminding me on (sic) prayer with her in private, and the characteristic simplicity of her own prayers. But it is impossible in a memoir, designedly brief, to convey a fair idea her inestimable usefulness to me and all around her; and I gladly content myself with a very faint delineation of the many excellent traits of her character. Knowing, that her reward is in Heaven; and will be the greater there, the less she coveted men's praise on Earth. It will, however. be pardonable in me, to add this small, this very inadequate tribute of my inmost affection. In my inexpressibly beloved Lina a steadiness of purpose uncommon in her years, was so blended with cheerfulness of disposition; discrimination of character with agreeable ease of conversation; and the strictest propriety of conduct with a blandishment and sweet familiarity of manners; that no one knew her long, without esteeming her greatly.



And now a few words still of her last days and hours: She always enjoyed excellent health, until a fortnight before her death, when she gave birth to the 2nd and only surviving daughter on Sunday, 6th July last. No alarming symptoms, however, made their appearance before the night of the 16th, when puerperal fever clearly showed itself. From that night to her death I had 3 medical men, twice a day, to attend to her, the Governor also rendering his services. But all human help was, alas! in vain. During nights Mrs Rhodes and Mr Schon were unremitting in assisting me to watch by her side; and during the last 24 hours a great number of our Missionary friends were present. For several days previous my dearest Lina began to feel and to express the strongest presentiments of death, and would repeatedly call upon me to pray with her; and sometimes with the most characteristic simplicity, pray for herself. Once when fancying herself a little better, she turned to the wall and said; "My dear Lord Jesus, I thank Thee, that Thou hast made me a little better. Perhaps, Thou wilt yet spare my life; and then I will thank thee very much." Her mind appeared generally very calm and tranquil, yet I have good reason to believe, that it appeared so only; for sometimes in the midst of most quiet repose she would faintly call out: "Who is this? and who that, yonder?" any when I named any of the bystanders, or nearest living friends, she would distinctly reply: "No," but when I named some of our families already in Heaven, she would say: "O yes!" and repeat their names: This, to me, was a sufficient proof, that what is generally called wanderings and aberration of mind, is frequently nothing else, than a gradual abstraction of the soul from the visible world; and a gradual opening to its perception of the new world of spirits; where Christ is all in all, the bright rays of his light illuminating the darkness of death; through which the pilgrim light illuminating the darkness of death; through which the pilgrim has to pass. Therefore also the ceaseless exclamation of my dear Lina (as if her spiritualized eye already saw Him. Whom unseen she had loved) saying "My dear Lord, Jesus!" This precious sentence I say she repeated again and again, until for very faintness of death the sweet sound could be heard no longer by our outward ears; but would reecho sweeter and far happier in Heaven. It was now 8½ p.m. (on Sunday, the 20th July); at this time I brought Mr. Schön to offer up a last prayer; which done, her blessed spirit took its flight to Heaven, her eternal home; leaving to her fond and inexpressibly afflicted husband beside the precious legacy of an infant daughter, the sure and certain of meeting her again, whose death shall separate no more.

In accordance with express desire the day before her death and, no less, with my own fond wishes, her mortal remains were conveyed from Freetown to Kent; where, at her funeral on the 22nd July /45, the widows and children of Kent stood by her bier weeping and shewing the coats and garments which she had made, while she was yet with them: For in truth, she had been a Dorcas to the whole parish; and to me my unspeakably beloved, and now sainted Lina has been (and is) a treasure, so incomparably above all those things on Earth; that, since her death, no event can possibly be more welcome to me, than also to die the death of the righteous, and that my last end be like her's. Till then, my ever dearest Lina! precious Angel! Farewell! Now canst thou fare but well, for where Thou are is Christ, is Heaven, and joy for Evermore. And now, brethren, I remain Your inexpressibly afflicted and deeply mourning Fellow Labourer.

(Signed) Frederic Bultmann

(Extracted from CMS Archive West Africa Sierra Leone CA1 M12)

Missionary Photographs and Other Reproductions

Anne Marie Javouhey, Foundress of the Cluny Sisters.



**Figure I** Sister Javouhey of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny

Source: Bane, M. J. *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa* London 1961 (opp. p. 129)



SARAH FORBES BONNETTA.  
THE AFRICAN CAPTIVE.

LONDON: LONGMAN & CO. 1851.

**Figure 2** Sarah Forbes Bonnetta (as a young girl)

Source: Forbes, F. E. *Dahomey and the Dahomians* Vol. II (opp. the title page)



SARAH FORBES BONEITA (MRS. DAVIES),  
*In her younger days, and in native dress.*

**Figure 3** Mrs. Davies (formerly Sarah Forbes Bonetta)  
Source: *CM Gleaner* January 1880 p. 185



Mrs. Susannah Klein  
Early Nineteenth Century



Mrs Anna Hinderer  
Mid Nineteenth Century



Miss Edith Wharton  
Early Twentieth Century

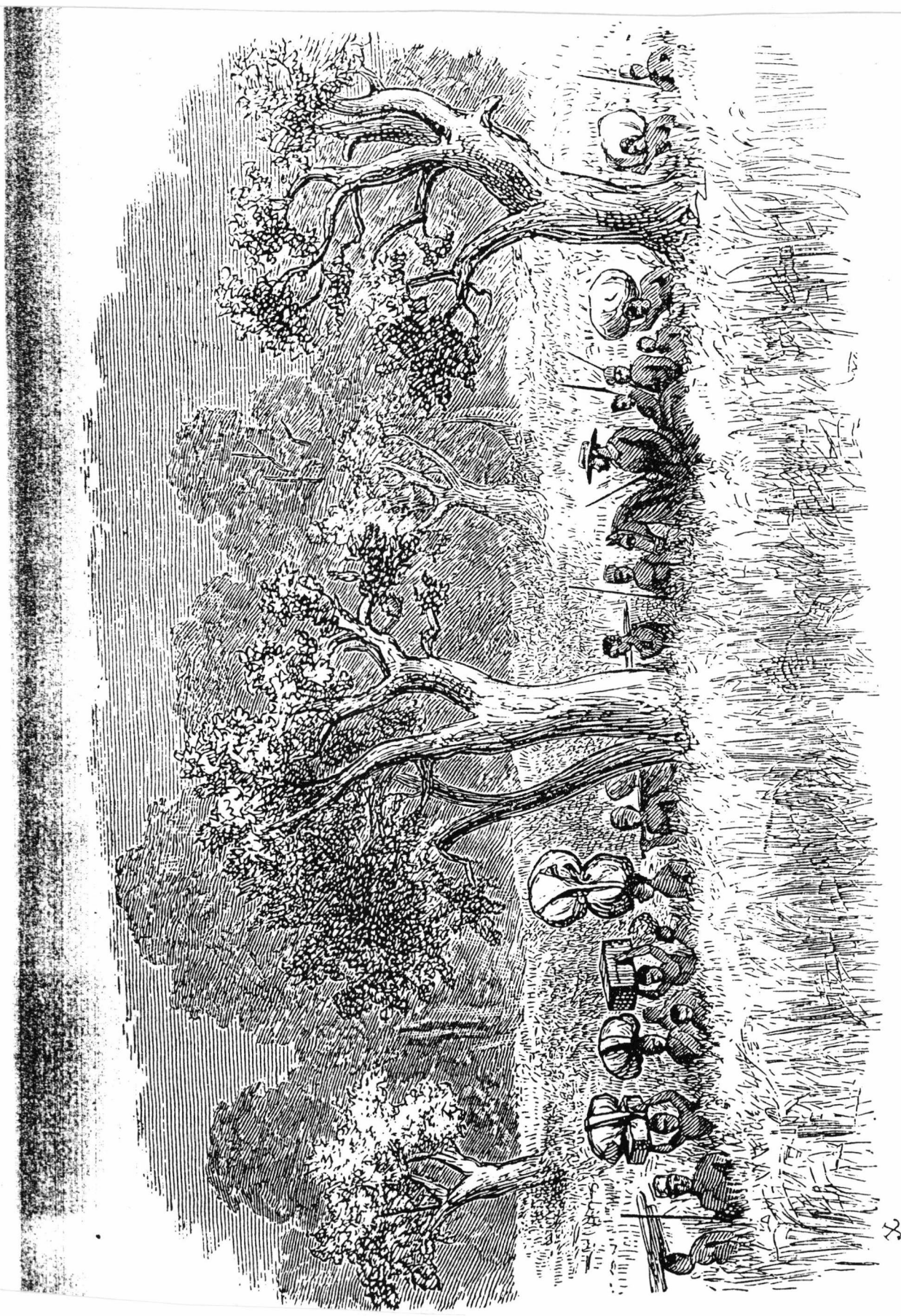
**Figure 4** The Changing Face of Missionary Women in British West Africa in the 19th Century

Source: Susannah Klein *CM Gleaner* April 1903 p. 61

Anna Hinderer *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* (opp. title page)

Edith Warner - Basden, G. T. *Edith Warner of the Niger* (opp. title page)

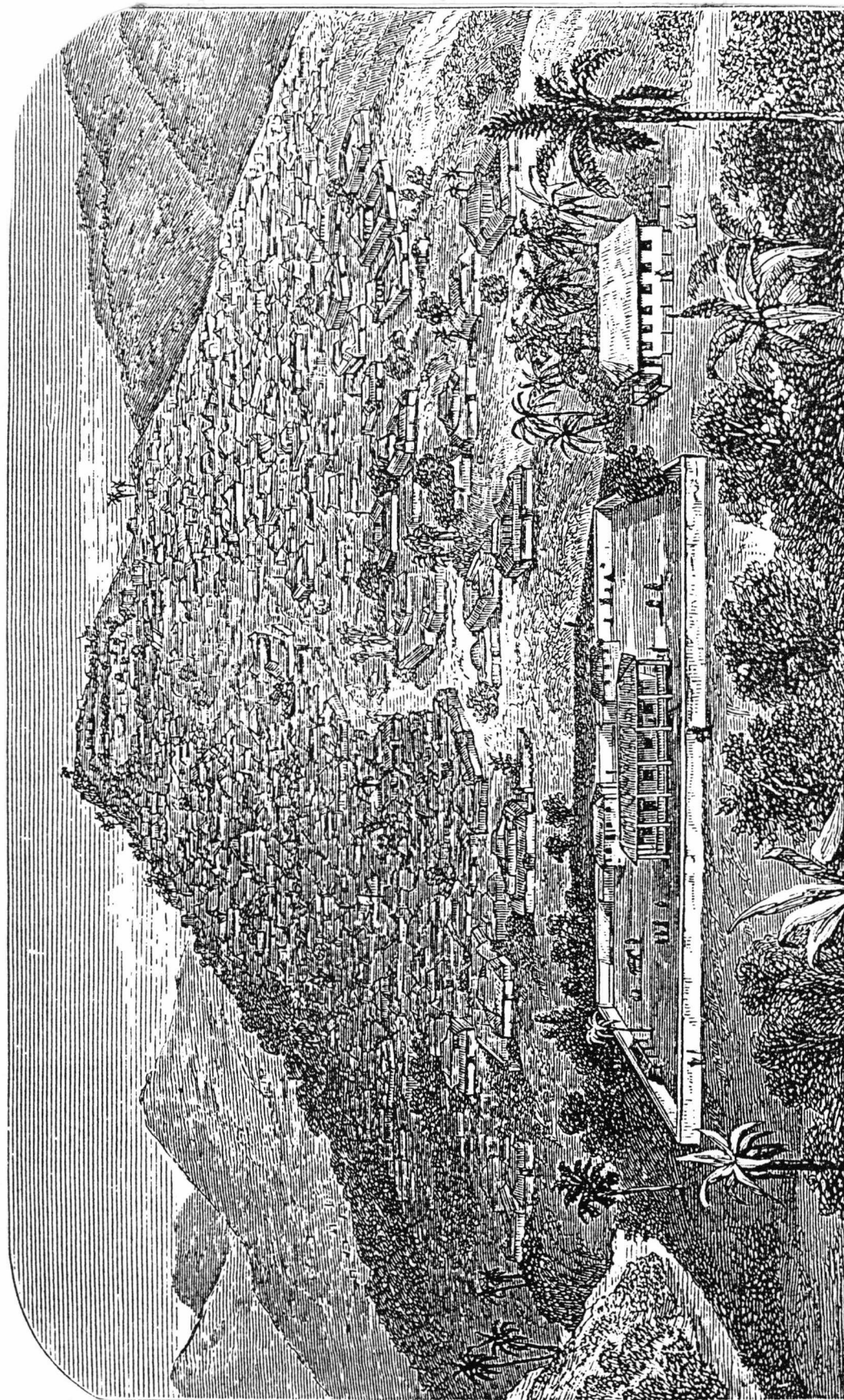




JOURNEY FROM LAGOS.

Figure 5 Journey to Ibadan

Source: Anna Hinderer *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba* opposite p. 20

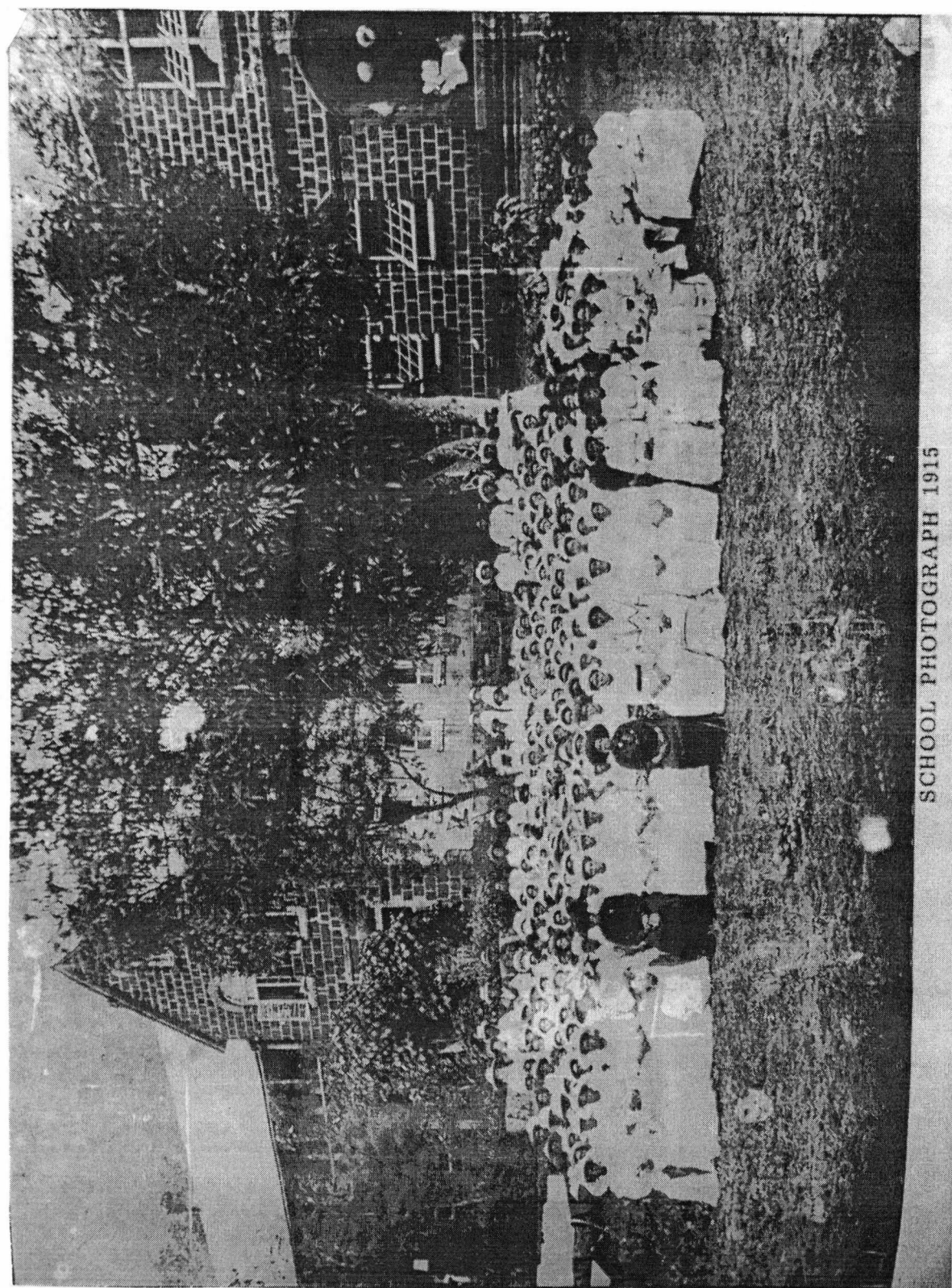


CHURCH AND MISSION HOUSE AT IBADAN.

**Figure 6** Church and Mission House at Ibadan

**Source:** Anna Hinderer *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba* opposite p. 98





**Figure 7** The Annie Walsh Memorial School 1915

Source: *Annie Walsh Memorial School 1849-1989: School's Register and History*



**Figure 8** Mborie- one of my attentive hearers -drawn by Archdeacon Crowther of the Niger Delta Pastorate, late 19th century

**Source:** CMS Papers, Special Collections, University of Birmingham

D-30.5.23



**Figure 9** Girls' School Abokobi, Gold Coast, probably early 1900s  
**Source:** Basel Mission Picture Library