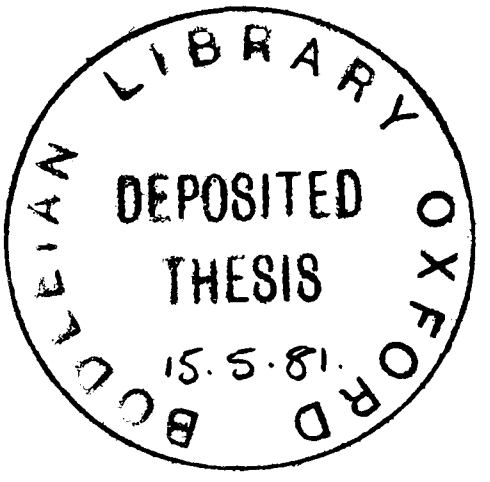
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Faculty of Theology

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO ISLAM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE WORK OF S.A. CROWTHER, E.W. BLYDEN AND W.R.S. MILLER IN WEST AFRICA



E.D.A. HULMES

Oriel College, Oxford

Michaelmas Term, 1980

SHORT ABSTRACT:

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E.D.A. Hulmes, Oriel College, Oxford. D.Phil. Michaelmas Term, 1980

The purpose of the study is to compare the attitudes to Islam of Samuel Crowther, Edward Blyden, and Walter Miller in the light of their work in West Africa. Their careers overlapped to some extent. Crowther was active from 1841-1891, Blyden from 1851-1912, Miller from 1897-1952.

Each man was involved in missionary activity. For Crowther and Miller this was life-long. In Blyden's case, the break came in 1886, when he resigned as a Presbyterian minister, to become what he called 'a minister of Truth'. After this date his career became more controversial. Like the other two, he continued to be interested in the theory and practice of mission among Muslims and in a critical comparison of Christianity and Islam, as religious systems which could secure liberation for Africans from all forms of slavery, whether physical, cultural or spiritual.

The study consists of nine chapters which provide a systematic analysis of the central theme. The introductory section discusses purpose, method and scope. Chapter one consists of an analysis of Christian attitudes to Islam, which serves as the basis for a comparison of the attitudes of Crowther, Blyden and Miller in the final chapter. The second chapter deals with the nineteenth century background to the work of the three men. The following chapters deal, successively, with the life and attitude to Islam of each man. The chapters on attitudes are divided, thematically, in order to discuss the various aspects more systematically. The concluding chapter contains a comparative assessment. Two appendices (concerned with Blyden and Miller, respectively), a full list of sources, and a bibliography, complete the study.

ABSTRACT

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1. Purpose. The purpose of this study is to consider, and to compare, the attitudes to Islam of Samuel Crowther, Edward Blyden, and Walter Miller, in the light of their work in West Africa.

2. Method. Work on the study began in Nigeria, and has been continued in Oxford, London, Birmingham and in parts of the north-eastern United States. In each of these centres, major sources of archival material have been consulted on several occasions.

The study consists of nine chapters which provide a systematic analysis of the central theme. The introductory section discusses purpose, method and scope. Chapter one consists of an analysis of Christian attitudes to Islam, which serves as the basis for a comparison of the attitudes of Crowther, Blyden and Miller in the final chapter. The second chapter deals with the nineteenth century background to the work of the three men. The following chapters deal, successively, with the life, and attitude to Islam of each man. The chapters on attitudes are divided, thematically, in order to discuss the various aspects more systematically. The concluding chapter contains a comparative assessment. Two appendices (concerned with Blyden and Miller, respectively), a full list of sources, and a bibliography, complete the study.

The primary sources consist of the published works of Crowther, Blyden, and Miller, together with the considerable amount of archival material preserved in the libraries of the parent missionary societies for which they worked. Not all of this material has been fully catalogued, or published. Some of it has already been dispersed, under proper supervision and authority, to other libraries. Since work started on this study, many files relating to Church Missionary Society activity in West Africa have been transferred from the Society's headquarters in London, to the Special Collections Room in the University of Birmingham. Many secondary sources have been consulted. Among these is the increasing number of monographs and articles dealing with aspects of West African history, which, while not directly bearing on the main theme of the study, nevertheless provide indispensable information about the historical background. This is particularly true of the work of several distinguished African scholars, who, writing about the history of their own communities, tend to see both Christianity and Islam as immigrant faiths in West Africa, and who are at pains to emphasise the importance and continuing resilience, of African Traditional Religion in the spiritual life of the indigenous peoples. A discussion of these traditional beliefs and practices lies outside the scope of the present work but frequent references are made to their significance, especially in the sections devoted to Crowther.

3. Scope. Each of these three men was deeply involved in Christian missionary work among Muslims. In seeking to present the

Christian faith to the indigenous peoples of parts of black Africa, where Islam had already been established for several centuries, they faced common problems of communication and interpretation. Their responses to these common problems differed, and it is these differences which give point to the comparative study. Their careers, which overlapped to some extent, span a period of more than a century - from Crowther's first journey into the Niger territory in 1841, to Miller's death, at his home near Jos, in 1952.

Two reasons are given for choosing these three men for special attention. The first is that they were indisputably influential in the formulation of Christian attitudes to Islam, not only in their immediate surroundings in West Africa, but also further afield. The period in which they were active - that is, from the early nineteenth century, when West Africa witnessed a revival of both Christian and Muslim missionary endeavour, to the eve of political independence from European colonial administration in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria - provides the student with a comprehensive picture of the difficulties which beset those who engage in Christian mission among Muslims. The second reason for concentrating on Crowther, Blyden and Miller, is that each differed from the others in background, education, temperament, and professional training. A comparison of their careers, and an analysis of their achievements as well as of their mistakes, is of interest to anyone who seeks to understand the impact of human personality on the subtle processes by which the theory of Christian mission becomes transformed into its praxis. What

emerges from this study is an account of how three very different individuals coped with the problems of presenting the Christian Gospel to Muslims conditioned by a distinctive cultural milieu. The fact that, in the process, their own convictions and attitudes were frequently challenged, adds to the interest of their careers, not least because of present-day interest in inter-faith dialogue.

Crowther gave fifty years of service to the Church Missionary Society, from 1841 to his death in 1891. His mother was a Yoruba Muslim, and it was a group of marauding Yoruba Muslims who attacked his village in 1821. They destroyed it, and captured many villagers, including Crowther, whom they sold for shipment as slaves to the Americas. The boy Crowther was liberated by a ship of the Royal Navy, and sent to Sierra Leone. There he went to school. Subsequently he was selected and trained for the ordained ministry of the Anglican Church, returning as a missionary to his own people in 1846. In 1864 he was appointed the first black African bishop of a diocese which extended from the Niger to the Senegal river. For the rest of his life he had to contend with administrative, as well as with pastoral problems. It is against this background (which included some considerable opposition from European fellow-Christian missionaries, who doubted his capacity - as a black - to build up the young church in West Africa), that his attitude to Islam, and to Muslims, has to be considered.

Blyden left the United States for Liberia in 1851, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. After further training he was ordained as a minister, and continued to work for the Pres-

byterian Board of Foreign Missions, chiefly in education, until his resignation in 1886. The reasons for his resignation, and for his decision to become what he called, "a minister of Truth", are considered in this study. This break with an established missionary society did not mark the end of his interest in institutional religion. After 1886 he became known even more widely as a champion of racial equality, and he campaigned vigorously for this cause, in Europe and the United States, as well as in West Africa. From this date until his death in 1912, he worked for the liberation of the Negro from all forms of slavery, even though he was increasingly frustrated by neglect, and enfeebled by old age. Blyden's attitude to Islam has to be measured against his theory of race.

Miller trained as a doctor in London, and elected to answer what he held to be a specific call to work as a missionary among the Muslims of Northern Nigeria, first in Zaria, and then in Kano. He arrived in Sierra Leone in 1897, before making the long and adventurous overland trip from Lagos to Kano. He spent over fifty years, most of it as a medical missionary with the Church Missionary Society in Northern Nigeria, and decided, finally, to spend his last years in retirement there. His attitude to Islam reflects the understandably paternalistic approach of the British to the problems associated with the administration of a newly-won colonial territory, but Miller was far from unsympathetic to the Islamic way of life.

Crowther and Blyden were black. Both achieved eminence, international acclaim, and even notoriety, for their work during their own life-time. In consequence, they have both become exemplary

figures for black people who seek advancement for themselves, and recognition of the merits of indigenous African culture, in a world dominated by white achievement and interest. Miller was an Englishman, whose attitudes were influenced by the doctrines and practices of the evangelical wing of the Church of England. The study considers the influence of background and personality on the attitudes to Islam of each man, and examines the extent to which they came to modify - as a result of this long and varied experience in West Africa - the prevailing exclusive, and largely dismissive attitudes to Islam, of contemporary European Christians. All three men continued to be interested in the theory and practice of Christian mission among Muslims, as well as in a critical comparison of both Christianity and Islam, as universal, and apparently exclusive, religious systems, which promised to deliver black Africans from bondage, whether physical cultural or spiritual.

Of central importance to the study is the analysis of their attitudes to Islam. This analysis is contained in the sections which deal with specific aspects of the ways in which Crowther, Blyden and Miller wrote, and spoke, about Islam and about Muslims. Such matters as the personal approach of a Christian to Muslims; the importance of Scriptures in Christianity, and in Islam; the question of how religion modifies attitudes to racial distinctions; and how both Christianity and Islam affect the social order, are systematically considered.

4. Conclusions. Although Crowther was the subject of a number of monographs within a few years of his death, little has been done since to re-assess his attitudes to Islam. The defects of the earlier work on him are evident in the somewhat uncritical, and almost hagiographical, pages, written by his late Victorian contemporaries. In more recent times the attempt has been made to assess his career from a point of view of the scholar, whose perspective is that of the historian of religions. This approach is more detached, and more critical, but its value in interpreting Crowther's attitude to Islam is limited. In the present study, an attempt is made to understand the implications for mission of his own conversion, that is to say, his own 'liberation', and to examine the part played by personal faith in Christ, in his wrestling with the truth-claims of another faith. The idea that he was a pioneer of inter-faith dialogue is a modern aberration. His concern for the Muslim was the fruit of Christian convictions that all sinners - that is to say, all who did not profess Christ - needed to repent and be saved. On the other hand, the view that he betrayed his own cultural traditions by becoming an Anglican bishop, developing into "a black Englishman" in the process, seems to be unjustified. He remains an unique figure in the story of Christian missions in Africa, a black African whose blue-print for the building up of an indigenous Christian church was increasingly frustrated by white intervention. He was a pastor, rather than an administrator. His gifts were pastoral rather than bureaucratic. The key to his work is in his understanding of liberation in Christ. It is for this reason that the sections on his life and work are introduced by the phrase "the liberated slave". In this respect his life was exemplary.

Blyden, by contrast, has suffered at the hands of those who claim him as the father of pan-Negro nationalism. In several quarters he has been hailed as the defender of Negro culture, and scant attention has been paid to his theological motivation. It is true that he was a vociferous champion of racial equality. This epithet serves to introduce the chapters on his life and work. The fact is that his religious convictions were different from Crowther's. Without the latter's deep personal faith in Christ as the incarnate son of God, Blyden had less difficulty than Crowther in understanding the essential unitarianism so fundamental to Islam. Yet he never became a Muslim, and never ceased to describe himself as a Christian.

Miller was a missionary doctor, imbued with the ideal of service in the name of Christ. For him, the challenge of Empire was an opportunity to shed light in dark places. His character was formed in the crucible of a strictly disciplined life. He believed that conversion from Islam to Christianity meant moving from a faith which was incomplete, to a faith which was fuller. And the key to this fuller faith was Jesus, a Prophet honoured in Islam, but seriously misunderstood by Muslims. His approach was direct, and without theological subtlety. Increasingly he identified with the human needs of those he came to serve. This led him to a position from which he felt obliged to link the requirements of the Gospel with an expression of socialism, as he expounded the Social Gospel. He is best known, perhaps by the title accorded to him in a Times obituary, and placed at the head of the chapter which considers his career, as, "the Apostle to the Hausas".

Each of these three very different men influenced the course of future events in West Africa. Each played a prophetic rôle in preparing Africans for the eventual transition from colonial dependence to national independence. This is clear from a careful review of their careers as a whole. From the narrower focus of this study, it may also be stated, with less diffidence than formerly, that the evidence provided by their attitudes to Islam furnishes Christian supporters of mission with a timely reminder of the importance - even for ecumenism - of maintaining a consistently powerful witness from the Christian side. The concept of witnessing to the truth of revelation is well understood by Muslims, a fact to which Crowther, Blyden and Miller could testify ex animo.

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To all the people who have helped me with advice and criticism, during the course of my research in Africa, Europe, and the United States - not least the members of my own family - I offer my thanks.

Abbreviations.

(Note: full bibliographical details of books mentioned here, are given infra, pp. 393-429)

ACS	American Colonization Society.
AME	African Methodist Episcopal (Church).
AQ	A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'ān.
BSACH	Bulletin of the Society for African Church History.
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
CHI	Cambridge History of Islam.
CINR	E.W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race.
CMN	J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891.
CMS	Church Missionary Society.
CTA	C.G. Baëta (ed.) Christianity in Tropical Africa.
CUP	Cambridge University Press.
EHM	Samuel Crowther, Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa.
EWB	H.R. Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot.
FO	Foreign Office.
HA	P.K. Hitti, History of the Arabs.
HCMS	Eugene Stock, History of the Church Missionary Society.
HNM	W.O. Ajayi, A History of the Niger and Northern Nigeria Missions, 1857-1914.
HWA	J.F.A. Ajayi, and Michael Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa.
IREM	P.R. Mackenzie, Inter-Religious Encounters in West Africa.

IRM	International Review of Mission
ITA	I.M. Lewis (ed.) Islam in Tropical Africa.
JAH	Journal of African History.
JAS	Journal of African Studies.
JHP	The John Holt Papers.
JHSN	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria.
JRA	Journal of Religion in Africa.
LIM	Ian Linden, The Isawa Mallams.
LP	The Lugard Papers.
MIMN	E.A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria.
OUP	Oxford University Press.
PAM	J. Christensen, The Practical Approach to Muslims.
PBFM	Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (annual reports).
PTS	Princeton Theological Seminary (Library).
SCM	Student Christian Movement.
SEI	Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam.
SLB	H.R. Lynch (ed.) Selected Letters of Edward Blyden.
SPCK	Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.
TBB	Jesse Page, The Black Bishop.
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.
VOM	Voice of Mission, Atlanta, Georgia.
WMA	Walter Miller, An Autobiography.
WMC	Walter Miller, The Coiners.
WMBN	Accession 237, CMS: Notes for a Biography of Miller. [1]
WMRP	Walter Miller, Reflections of a Pioneer.

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1. See note (e) infra, page 395.

Introduction: Purpose, scope and method of the Study.

The purpose of this study is to consider, and to compare, the attitudes to Islam, of Samuel Crowther, Edward Blyden, and Walter Miller. It is prudent, at the outset, to make the scope of the study clear in this way, and to state that the present work is intended to contribute to a fuller understanding of the achievements of these three men, by concentrating on a single, but highly significant, aspect of their varied careers.

Work on the study began in Nigeria. The information collected over a period of three and a half years provided material for a preliminary consideration of the central theme. The conclusions reached on the basis of that investigation have since been revised in the light of more detailed and systematic research. The presentation of the findings of this research has now been refined to meet the requirements of a carefully defined, and coherent study.

Crowther, Blyden and Miller spent the greater part of their lives in West Africa. Their active careers span the century and a decade, from Crowther's work on the Niger in 1841, to Miller's death in 1952. Each of these men was a prominent pioneer of Christian mission among West African Muslims, and each had a great deal to say about the relationship between Christianity and Islam. Two reasons can be given for choosing them for special attention. The first is that they were indisputably influential

in the formulation of Christian attitudes to Islam, not only in their immediate surroundings in West Africa, but also further afield. A close study of their work in the period during which they were successively active - that is, from the early nineteenth century, when West Africa witnessed a revival of both Christian and Muslim missionary endeavour, to the eve of political independence from European colonial administration in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria - furnishes the student with a comprehensive picture of the difficulties which beset those who engage in Christian mission among Muslims. The second reason for choosing Crowther, Blyden and Miller, is that their approaches to common problems were individual and distinctive. Each man differed from the other two in background, education, temperament and professional training. A comparison of their careers, and an analysis of their achievements as well as of their mistakes, is of interest to anyone who seeks to understand the impact of human personality on the subtle processes by which the theory of Christian mission becomes transformed into its praxis. What emerges from this study is an account of how three individuals coped with the problems of presenting the Christian Gospel to Muslims conditioned by a distinctive cultural milieu. The fact that, in the process, their own convictions and attitudes were frequently challenged, adds to the interest of their careers, not least because of present-day pre-occupation with inter-faith dialogue. This latter consideration gives further point to the selection of Crowther, Blyden and Miller for detailed study. It is anachronistic to think of them as

pioneers of inter-faith dialogue, in the modern application of the term. As the following pages show, their contribution to encounter between Christians and Muslims is to be understood, primarily, in the studied particularity which they brought to the discussion from the Christian side.

The careers of Crowther, Blyden and Miller overlapped to some extent. Crowther came first, completing almost fifty years of missionary effort in West Africa (not all of it among Muslims), after his arrival in 1841. His consecration as the first black bishop in the area, in 1864, marks a turning point in the development of a local church, led by native priests and pastors. The considerable, if only temporary, failure of the European missionary leadership to recognise and to satisfy the powerful aspirations of indigenous Christians for independence and self-government created difficulties for any Christians, black or white, in presenting the Gospel in areas where Islam was established, or where Muslims began to have influence. Muslim apologists asserted that Islam provided the African with a coherent way of life which Christianity was unable to match.

This lesson was soon learned by Blyden, and it became the major pre-occupation of his formidable intellect. By the time of Crowther's death in 1891, Blyden was already established as a black savant of considerable intellectual power, both in West Africa and in Europe. He had arrived on the Coast for the first time when he came to Liberia in 1851. His understanding of Christian mission among black Africans, and his attitude to Islam, were profoundly influenced by his pre-occupation with the

wider question of black emancipation. His goal was to establish in Africa a pan-Negro[1.] civilization, conscious of its own distinctive roots. Blyden's ideas were highly influential. He wrote, and spoke, in a vigorous and frequently polemical style. He was listened to eagerly, and widely read. His name was familiar in West Africa, in Britain and in the United States.

Miller was the last of the three men to arrive in West Africa. Like the others he was long-lived.[2.] He spent almost fifty years in Nigeria. Unlike the other two he was white. He could claim no African ancestors. He was an Englishman, a man of Devon, in whom the call to serve as a Christian missionary in some part of the Muslim world was beginning to form at the time when Crowther was coming to the end of his life. Of the three protagonists in this study it was Miller who was to devote himself, almost exclusively, to the predominantly Muslim people of Northern Nigeria.

Each of the men whose work is to be considered lived a full life and demonstrated a wide variety of gifts in various aspects of human endeavour. It is not the purpose of this study to emphasise the variety of gifts, but to concentrate upon certain aspects of their use. This means that in the case of each individual the prime consideration will be to observe how each man responded as a Christian to the challenge of Islam. This study is not in-

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1. Hollis R. Lynch, (ed.). Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden, KTO Press, 1978, page 4.
2. The date of Crowther's birth is uncertain. His dates are best given as 1806-1891. Blyden lived from 1832-1912; Miller from 1872-1952.

tended to be a discussion of Christian attitudes to Islam in general. Nor is it a history of the development of different Christian attitudes to Islam. The study is not biographical in the sense that it is designed to give a rounded and critical picture of the three lives. Biographical detail is given prominence, but only to shed light on the development of Christian attitudes to Islam in West Africa.

The method adopted for presenting the material provides a systematic conceptual framework for the study. The first chapter contains a discussion of Christian attitudes to Islam. This is intended to provide a basis for the comparison of the attitudes of Crowther, Blyden and Miller. The second chapter is concerned with the nineteenth century historical background. There then follow three sections dealing with Crowther, Blyden and Miller, respectively. Each of these sections is divided into two chapters, the first of which provides a biographical setting. The second deals in detail with the attitude to Islam of the individual concerned, as evidenced by his written and spoken record. In each case the material is treated thematically, in order to present a coherent review. The final chapter contains a critical comparison of the attitudes of the three men to Islam, based upon the analysis made in chapter one.

Material has been collected in several libraries and archives far removed from the place in Nigeria - Onitsha - where a plan for the research was initially considered, and where the first enquiries were made. Since then the search has proceeded in London, Birmingham, Oxford and in various parts of the north-eastern United States.[1]

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1. For the list of sources, see infra, pp. 393-395.

1. Christian Attitudes to Islam.

In this chapter, two sets of Christian attitudes to Islam are considered. These attitudes are not always to be distinguished sharply from each other. They tend to overlap, and to coalesce. There is, nevertheless, a wide gap between those attitudes which resolve themselves into variations on the theme of Christian truth against Muslim error, and those attitudes which derive from a relative approach to religious truth. The following analysis presents some of these attitudes in two separate, but related,groups. The first group includes a number of responses to the assertion that Christianity is true, and that Islam is false. The second group reflects a set of attitudes, less doctrinal, and more existential, in nature.

(i) Truth, falsehood, and degrees of relativism.

The attitude that Christianity is true, and Islam false, is easy to parody and to misrepresent, but it is a view which is not to be excluded, a priori, even in the interests of a wider ecumenism.[1.] Widespread ignorance on the part of Christians, both with regard to their own faith, as well as to that of Islam, has made a critique of this view more difficult. The ghost of triumphalism is not easily laid. Contemporary exhortations to eschew the language of triumphalism in the interests of tolerance are understandable, but to establish the principle of tolerance as the sole criterion for the evaluation of dialogue may be to

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1. One of the most vigorous contemporary presentations of this view is found in Jens Christensen, The Practical Approach to Muslims, North Africa Mission, 1977.

do violence to the truth, and it is the truth which needs to be taken seriously. There is no substitute for this. There are many Christians who hold to the view that Islam (and all other religions) will finally be displaced by Christianity. This may not be a view which they are encouraged to express publicly, but as a private conviction it loses none of its motivating force. But this attitude is not necessarily inconsistent with the recognition of truth, or at least partial truth, in another faith. The common affirmation of monotheism in the form of a personal and transcendent creator God makes it difficult for the Christian to reject Islam as wholly false.

The problem of reconciling such apparently antipathetic religious systems as Christianity and Islam has tended, particularly in recent years, to be circumvented rather than solved. If it be true to say that the Christian attitude which appears at the beginning of this section is simplistic and naïve, then there are also grounds for thinking that any suggested answer which fails to take seriously the question of truth as seen from a given religious position is also naïve, if not misleading.

Yet it remains true of the approach of some Christians to the claims of Islam even today. It is difficult to justify the view that the one religion is true and the other false, quite apart from the problem of elucidating what is meant here by the word "true".[1] It can be said that Christianity shares

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1. As an introduction to this subject see W.C. Smith "A Human View of Truth," in Truth and Dialogue (ed.) J. Hick, Sheldon, 1974, pp. 20-44.

some beliefs with Islam, and to this extent it would appear inconsistent to withhold recognition of those elements which appear to be common. Christians have been at pains, from the time when Muslims first laid the charge against them, to deny that the doctrine of the Trinity compromises the essential unity of God. Here, at any rate, there is room for the recognition of a common assertion on the basis of the Oneness of God. This is, it is claimed, an element of revealed truth, to which the adherents of both faiths hold. The differences of expression need not obscure the underlying agreement, although the misunderstandings on both sides require careful interpretation. To what extent do Muslims hold the opinion that trinitarian formulations deny the ontological unity of God, a unity (or principle of unifying, tawhīd) which is the central teaching of Islam? The suggestion that the true/false distinction is an oversimplification leads to a number of interesting variations.

The first has a logical coherence, in so far as it affirms that in the absence of independent criteria (by which the conflicting truth-claims of both religions can be assessed), neither group of believers can legitimately lay claim to absolute truth in the presence of the other. And there are - it is stated - no such independent criteria. This is a reflection of several approaches, which suggest different explanations of the facts of religious pluralism. These approaches are expressed in language which is both exploratory and tentative. Those who make them are required to subject hitherto cherished

and unquestioned beliefs to scrutiny and criticism.[1.]

Both Christianity and Islam may be seen from the perspective of cultural relativism. According to this view, both religions are appropriate expressions of the different cultures in which they appeared.[2.] Christianity becomes the religion of Western culture, and Islam the religion of Arab culture. This is doubtful for several reasons. The question has to be asked about the extent to which it is legitimate to describe a religion as consequent upon, and not formative of, a particular society. And when it comes to the two religions in question, with their widespread dissemination in the world, and their continuing development, it would seem inappropriate to equate either with this culture or that. The cultural differences between a Muslim from Indonesia and his co-religionist from Morocco are probably not less than those between a European and a Latin-American Christian.[3.] It would seem unlikely that practising Christians or Muslims could meet on the common ground provided by the belief that either religion is a by-product of culture. The seriousness of the encounter in the past, an encounter which has so often led to conflicts of passionate intensity,

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1. Jens Christensen, PAM, op.cit. page 5ff.

2. For a critique of this attitude the observations of Yasuo C. Furuya are helpful. See "The Significance of Asian Christianity: Note to Western Theologians," in Pacific Theological Review, Spring, 1977, pp. 24-26; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, "Christ and the Cultures", in Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 31, pp. 1-22.

3. See Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed, Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia, University of Chicago Press, 1973.

was a clear repudiation of this interpretation of cultural relativism. On the contrary, the faithful on both sides, seem to have held the view that religion was not only the basis of culture, but that in its "truest and highest" form it must change that culture, directing its purpose to different ends.

Another variant of this type of approach suggests a kind of epistemological relativism. Since truth is not demonstrably absolute, it is claimed that we can only be held by that which becomes truth for us. That which is, or becomes, the truth for us cannot be affirmed dogmatically, as demanding the allegiance of all. Such a view does not exclude the presentation of personally held convictions about the truth as an individual (or a group of individuals) sees it, but it does affect the manner of their presentation. It is for others to decide on this truth in the light of their own experience. The problem associated with claims about absolute truth is not solved by this ostensibly less dogmatic approach if it is pursued to its logical conclusion. How can we know that there is not absolute truth, without becoming entangled in a contradiction? Neither Christians nor Muslims are excused the labour involved in the pursuit of truth, nor are they precluded from asserting that what they have discovered is true, not only for them, but may be true for others, or universally true. It is facile to hold that truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. This is not the view that Christians and Muslims are permitted to hold, without surrendering allegiance to their religion, by a significant evacuation of its concept of truth.[1]

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1. cf. attempts to find common ground e.g. on basis of apparently similar concepts - 'revelation', 'God'. But these are different to Muslims and Christians. See Christensen, PAM, page 2.

The view that all religions in the world are, in their several ways, different paths to the same goal is not open to the Christian or Muslim, without so radical a modification of belief and practice, as would require an entirely new form of religious expression. This view is already a possible option for those who come to find its best expression within the framework of an existing religion, namely Hinduism. To espouse the view of teleological relativism is effectively to have moved over into another faith (leaving aside for a moment the technical question of having to be born into Hinduism). It is difficult to see how Christians and Muslims can follow this line of thought without carefully and deliberately vacating the positions which they formerly occupied. It is less a matter of re-interpretation and accommodation, than of repudiation. In any case, it is not true to say that Christianity and Islam provide identical conceptions of the chief end of man, nor of the way by which he comes ultimately to salvation or damnation.

Another variation attempts to resolve the difficulty presented by mutually exclusive truth-claims, by insisting that both Christianity and Islam are expressions of the same essential reality. Appearances may differ, but the same truth subsists in both. This approach attempts to penetrate into the heart of the matter, to the core of the different religious traditions. There at the centre, is the unchangeable reality of ultimate truth which finds different expression in the various religious traditions as men have come to know them. Underlying all the varieties of local expression is the essence of all religion.

It is this essence which can still be detected, given the required patience and persistence, even when - as in the case of Christianity and Islam - the external forms appear to be conflicting and antipathetic. But how is their "essence" to be understood and expressed? The difficulty of this task has daunted some investigators from the outset, directing them rather towards a study of the outward forms which, according to this view, clothe and even obscure the central identity.[1.]

Attempts have been made, nonetheless, to discover the essence which remains buried beneath the forms of institutional religion.

> 'It (i.e. the essence of religion) may be a matter of doctrine, morals or experience. It is variously affirmed to be mysticism .. the feeling of absolute dependence .. the numinous sense of the holy .. the moral imperative, or the personal encounter with God. Then the Christian interpretation of other religions is that they embody the essence of religion in varying degrees of imperfections and partiality, while the Christian faith constitutes the purest and fullest manifestation of this essence.'[2.]

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1. Max Weber Religionssoziologie: translated by Ephraim Fischoff, The Sociology of Religion, Methuen, 1966, page 1; cf. Clifford Geertz, op.cit. page 1, "The problem is not one of constructing definitions of religion. We have had quite enough of those; their very number is a symptom of our malaise. It is a matter of discovering just what sorts of beliefs and practices support what sorts of faith under what sorts of conditions. Our problem, and it grows worse by the day, is not to define religion but to find it."

2. Owen C. Thomas (ed.) in his Introduction to Attitudes towards other Religions, SCM 1969, page 21.

According to this view, the essence of all religion is to be sought, and found, in every age among the bewildering multiplicity of religious forms. Two lines of enquiry suggest themselves. First, that the essence is progressively revealed throughout history, finding more perfect expressions with the passage of time and the accumulation of experience. This evolutionary perspective scarcely commends itself either to Muslims or Christians. In terms of the meeting between these two faiths, the historical advantage thus accorded to Islam (which may be said to have arisen some six centuries after the mission of Jesus), serves it less well than the view - constantly asserted by Muslims - that Islam is essentially prior to Christianity.[1] This points to a second line of enquiry, namely, that the essence of religion is constantly to be re-discovered and then proclaimed. Here is something which Muslims and Christians have in common. It is because both groups claim to have the more perfect expression of the essence that each has dared to contend so vigorously with the other. Each group claims to see in the life of the other abundant evidence of accretion and corruption which has to be stripped away to reveal the purity of the self-expression which is the prerogative of God the Creator.

It is one thing to postulate the essence of religion. To describe it is another matter. It would be convenient to solve the problem of a disconcerting pluralism in this way, by treating everything which is demonstrably different, and apparently

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1. And also to Judaism. Ibrahim (Abraham) is often referred to by Muslims, as the first muslim, see Qur'an, 2 135; 3 67.

contradictory, as of secondary and derivative importance. But a solution which depends upon so abstract a concept raises problems of its own. Careful study of Islam and Christianity tends to point to significant differences of belief at a fundamental level. The analysis of what is taken to be the essence of religion, from whatever source, and however well-intentioned, seems to result in constructs which represent what their authors consider as the basis of what ought to be, rather than what is, or perhaps at one time was. They may be characterised by a paradoxical inversion of time in their expression. Appearing to point backwards in time, to that which lies buried beneath successive levels of accretion, to that which is at the heart of man's religious experience, they point rather to a future in which a newly-developed kind of religious consciousness can be brought to bear on what is seen to have become essential. It may be necessary to see it this way in order to show how the essence is timeless, transcending the limits of time and partial revelations, and for ever true. In practice the procedure may be classified as a variant of an evolutionary perspective, with lower forms giving way to higher forms of religious awareness and experience. Some Christians would take the view that Christianity is a higher expression of revealed truth than Islam - an attitude which is no less offensive to Muslim susceptibilities than the comprehensively dismissive attitude expressed in the formula "Christianity is true, and Islam is false".

To hold this view is to assert, on an evolutionary scale, that Christianity lays claim to be superior to Islam, notwithstanding the chronologically later rise of the latter. This is the posture of open conflict. With the terms "Christianity" and "Islam" transposed there is a formulation which has commended itself to Muslim apologists. This is the language of mutual exclusivism. The expression of this view by Christians is sometimes preferred by Muslims who have come to expect it anyway, and who are deeply suspicious and sceptical of any other kind of approach which purports to be eirenic. "If this is what Christians believe, then let them say it openly and we shall know where we stand." From the Christian side it may be noted that in whatever form it is expressed, it represents a conviction that all previous manifestations of religion, as well as Islam which came after the Christian revelation, are to be seen as preparations for the Gospel. It is in Christ that all find their fulfilment, and realise their potential.

The view that Christianity is a higher expression of revealed truth than Islam has been stated in a different form. The God in whom Christians believe is not only the Creator of the universe, but the Lord of all that happens within it. Everything, including all the different varieties of religious experience, have their origins in Him. In the whole of human history God is working out His purpose, and thus all religions play their part in the unfolding plan of Heilsgeschichte. God has revealed something of His purpose to all men, has placed within them a yearning to respond to Him. The supreme revelation of God's plan of salvation comes in the self-giving activity which illuminates the Incarnation, but all other manifestations of

religion have their place. They are like promises of an even fuller revelation of truth, which finds its noblest expression in Christianity. Such a view as this appears to raise once again the spectre of triumphalism. Perhaps it does, and perhaps some Christians have allowed the sentiment to dictate their relationships with people of other faiths in this way. Two things may be said at this point. In the first place, the attitude described here may be thought rather to encourage a careful study of other systems of religious belief and practice in the attempt to rediscover those evidences of God's grace in history which contribute to the whole plan of salvation-history. Second, that the basis for mission among Muslims is not the missionary strategy of what Hocking called "radical displacement",[1] but the patient exposition of the universal implications of God's plan of salvation in Christ. This approach has its difficulties, particularly when it comes to the meeting between adherents of different religions with such disparate conceptions of salvation as Christianity and Buddhism. As between Christianity and Islam the approach may be more fruitful. For both religions the figure of Jesus (<u>ʿIsā</u>) is of the greatest importance, but the real question remains unanswered. What are the consequences for Muslims (and others) who, having investigated the gospel of Jesus, reject its universal claims, preferring to remain within a tradition which (as Christians might say) remains <u>unfulfilled</u> without Christ?

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1. W.E. Hocking, <u>Re-thinking Missions</u>: A Layman's Inquiry after 100 years. Harper, N.Y. 1932, pp. 3-66.

(ii) Christian witness, relatedness, and presence.

Speaking of Christianity, W. Cantwell Smith notes, 'it is not true absolutely, impersonally, statically; rather it can become true, if and as, you and I appropriate it to ourselves, and interiorize it, insofar as we live it out from day to day'.[1.] The element of conflict between Christianity and Islam, as potentially irreconcilable religious systems, each bent on world domination, is thus eliminated (prematurely perhaps), in the presence of an attitude which emphasises that life itself - lived in its many variegated forms and local distinctions - is the primary concern of both religions. The conceptual frameworks of rival theologies, the differences of credal statements, of theological propositions, as well as of liturgical practice and ritual, are of secondary importance. They are secondary in the sense that they express and regulate concrete experiences of our response to God.[2.]

The point is that the choice of personal religion is not a matter of human selection from a plurality of options, which of course includes both Christianity and Islam, but a personal response in faith to a divine initiative, which only becomes authentic as a consequence of the individual's response to God. Truth is to be attained, or better, experienced, in the actual situations of everyday life. Intellectual capacity, gifts and graces, economic and social standing, have little to do with

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1. Questions of Religious Truth, Gollancz, 1967, p. 68.
2. ibid, p. 115.

the matter, the crux of which is the individual response to God. This process of becoming, this authentication of divine revelation in the lived life of the individual, cuts across boundaries of time and space, and is not to be confused with the notion of an evolutionary progression to some distant omega point, as man struggles to a higher and more complex state of religious awareness and consciousness.[1.]

In some ways this attitude recalls the one that is concerned with the essence of religion, whatever the local expression may happen to be. We are faced, once again, with a problem that appears to be insoluble. It is the problem of conflicting truth claims. It seems, to judge from the multiplicity of religions, that different religions bear witness to different understandings of ultimate reality which are mutually exclusive. But what if the different religions are human constructs, parts of a continuum of human religious experience and striving, which are now to be seen - not as perennially in conflict for the souls of men - but as gropings in the direction of that basic God/man relationship which, in times of primitive technology and the isolation of civilisations from each other, could not but be different and apparently exclusive?

In The Meaning and End of Religion,[2.] Cantwell Smith examines the concept of 'a religion' in such a way as to suggest that its use has led to a characteristically western attitude, that of

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1. cf. ibid, pp. 70-71.

2. New York, 1964.

categorising and differentiating religious systems which, by means of this analytical device, appear to be more distinct than they are. This has led in the course of time to the kind of reification of demonstrably different "religions", set up against each other, which now need to be reconciled in the interests of world community. But the problem is man-made. Better to consider the religious life of mankind as a dynamic growth, stimulated, or stunted, here and there by periods of intense religious activity. This attitude recognises unity as the prime datum.[1].

Now that the world is increasingly dominated by shared technologies and a universal scientific method, it is possible to <u>see</u> the universal incidence of man's striving for relationship with the divine, with different emphases on the nature of his speculative approach and of the divine initiative, hidden beneath an accidental dissimilarity of form. Christianity and Islam according to this view, are seen as historical embodiments of the same impulse to <u>realise</u> - to make real and authentic - the experience of God - in the lives of individuals.

The attitude that Christianity and Islam are on a converging course derives from a further attempt to resolve the problem of exclusivism from a more personal and immediate point of view. It is already clear that the impact of western technology and science has been to make more and more of the everyday experience

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1. cf. Thomas Merton, "We are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are", in <u>The World Religions Speak</u> (ed. F.P. Dunne Jr.) The Hague, 1970, page 81.

of people all over the world alike. In the gathering and dissemination of news and ideas, in travel, in public health and in many forms of avocation, there is a growing awareness of inter-dependence and world community. This is reflected in an understandable insistence upon the convergence of world faiths. How then, is the Christian to see Muslims, fellow members of a new world community? It is not a matter of expediency, nor of an ecumenism which brings together individuals from widely differing theological standpoints in a last-ditch effort to stave off the encroachments of materialism and secularism. It is something more positive than that, and is characterised by an emphasis on the recognition of what, stripped of the differences of cultural variations, is common to all.

The convergence of Christianity and Islam (and of other faiths too) was no more a possibility than dialogue, when cultural and geographical isolation perpetuated mutually exclusive polemics. Even so this sparring activity was for the few, with the vast majority of adherents on each side unaware of the existence of the others, about whose errors their leaders pronounced with studied vigour. The effective personal exploration of the faith of another was, for many reasons, rare. A cordon sanitaire was thrown about each community which continued as it was, scarcely disturbed. Epithets were hurled at others whose existence had to remain, for the most part, a matter of faith. Words like "infidels", "tritheists", "false prophet",

"polytheists", conveniently bound up the respective stereotypes of Muslim and Christian. Convergence[1.] was not even a physical possibility. But now it is - given the reliability of technology - and with it comes the possibility of another kind of convergence, in the domain of religious experience and expression. As people meet and mix throughout the world there are fresh opportunities for the recognition of what unites them. Convergence does not necessarily point to religious synthesis and syncretism. It points to unity of commitment, to the solution of the problems of a shrinking planet on which people are said to be sharing increasingly the same experience of life.[2.]

A rather different line is taken by Cantwell Smith, who suggests that it might be,

> 'theoretically and practically possible to see two differing statements as an individual invitation to synthesis rather than a challenge to confrontation'.[3.]

This is reasonable, given an attitude on both sides, which prefers reasonableness to confrontation in any case. The facts, so far as Christians and Muslims are concerned, are different. The "invitation to synthesis" is something to be feared and resisted as involving a fundamental betrayal. For anyone who is not directly involved, who is neither Christian nor Muslim, the suggestion might commend itself as the best possible resolution of present difficulty. An outsider, professing neither Islam nor Christianity, could be forgiven for registering surprise that so basic a claim about the nature of

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1. R.E. Whitson, The Coming Convergence of World Religions, Newman, New York, 1971, pp. ix-x. In 1977, 1978 and 1979, the present writer had opportunities to discuss these ideas with Fr. Whitson in his home in Bethlehem, Connecticut.
2. William Cenkner, "The Convergence of Religions", in Cross Currents, vol. xxii, no. 4, 1973, pp. 429-437.
3. "Conflicting Truth-Claims: A Rejoinder", in Truth and Dialogue, (ed.) John Hick, Sheldon, 1974, p. 160.

monotheism which is at the heart of both faiths, should occasion such protracted antipathy. It may be a question of misunderstanding about the use of terms. The differences are apparent, not real. Reason should dictate that confrontation is inappropriate. Yet armed conflicts between the disciples of Jesus and the followers of Muḥammad are to be numbered among the most passionate and bitter wars of history.

If these conflicts have progressively alienated Christians and Muslims from each other so that they have become insensitive to the truth which resides in both religions, it is unrealistic to expect that they should now learn to be mutually tolerant, on the grounds that both communities now face common foes - rampant nationalism and secularization - on a world scale. A frequently heard criticism is to the effect that ecumenism owes more to this kind of expediency than to a genuine desire for repentance for past divisions. For the believer, either Christian or Muslim, the task of reconciliation begins much further back and involves an activity for which there are very few, if any, clear ground-rules. The encounter between Christianity and Islam may swing between two poles. On one side there is the kind of meeting which leads to conflict, which is characterised on both sides, by polemical claims to absolute truth.[1] At the other extreme, encounter may be circumscribed by the exchange of human pleasantries - an exercise which fails to recognise

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1. Words such as 'dialogue', 'meeting' and 'encounter' which are used with reference to what happens when adherents of different faiths come together, are in danger of becoming clichés. Eric Sharpe provides an analysis in "Dialogue and Faith", in Religion, (Autumn, 1973, pp. 89-105). This article elicited a response by W.C. Smith (ibid, pp. 106-114). See also the chapter "Dialogue", (Zwiesprache) in Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, tr. R.G. Smith, Fontana, 1961, pp. 17-59.

the real differences of opinion and interpretation which exist. It has been asserted in recent years, notably by John Hick,[1.] that the way forward lies in the recognition of the relativism of religious truth. It is suggested that a way of resolving the great differences which are raised by the very existence of so many conflicting, and apparently mutually exclusive, systems of faith, belief and practice, is to press for a recognition of the notion that absolute truth resides in no single religious system. Hick calls for a Copernican revolution in theology which would be analogous to the Copernican revolution in astronomy. To continue to consider Christianity (or for that matter Islam), as the centre of the universe of faiths, with all the other religious systems, as it were, orbiting around it - related but separate - would be as inappropriate as to continue to claim that the earth is the centre of the cosmos. What is to take the place in this model of the universe of faiths which is occupied in the cosmos by the sun? The answer according to Hick is God.

The attitude to be considered here is that which suggests another way forward. In apparently diametrically opposed religious statements it may be possible to detect, not conflict, but difference. This difference, reflecting a continuing activity of witness rather than the mere repetition of the dogmatic re-statement of theological propositions, requires sympathetic analysis and exposition in order to trace the beginnings of any possible agreement on essentials.

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1. God and the Universe of Faiths, London, 1973, pp. 120-133.

Talk about the convergence of religions at the present time, as if it were whole systems of belief and practice which were on the move, is misleading according to this view. Here and there it seems that a new spirit of understanding between individual Christians and Muslims is beginning to gain ground. It is certain that at least some Christians and some Muslims are showing a gradual desire to explore hitherto unknown territory, and to embark on an uncharted journey.[1] For them it is no longer a question of acting as spies sent out to discover the weaknesses of their opponents' defences, before calling up the regular troops to take the citadel by passage of arms. It is more a matter of a mutual exploration of another dimension of religious experience in which there is neither victor nor vanquished. It is possible to exaggerate the size of this new growth in tolerance and mutual understanding. It is not so easy to overstate its importance in the contemporary world.

Max Warren pointed out that a pre-condition for a genuine encounter between Christians and Muslims is

> 'the recognition on the part of each Faith that the other, like itself, is a missionary Faith. This is a fact rooted in history, but even more deeply rooted in the nature of each Faith itself....Both Christianity and Islam are missionary religions. And they are missionary precisely because both claim to be repositories of truth, truth which is universal in its relevance and therefore to be made available for all men'.[2]

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1. Roger Hooker, Uncharted Journey, C.M.S. 1973. The pioneer work of Kenneth Cragg does not lend itself easily to summary. The present writer is indebted to Dr. Cragg for many insights into Christian/Muslim dialogue. The bibliography records this indebtedness.

2. "The Encounter of Islam and Christianity in the 20th Century", Islamic Quarterly, vol. xiii, no. 2, pp. 102-111.

Is it possible for Christians and Muslims to continue to claim a serious interest in the inter-faith dialogue without surrendering the claims of their own faith to be the unique vehicle of religious truth? One answer, which has been recently made the subject of discussion, is less satisfactory than at first appears. This is the answer which requires the participants in dialogue to surrender the triumphalism which has for so long characterised the attitudes of Christians and Muslims towards each other. But this obscures the real issue. Changes in attitude are insufficient in themselves, and remain but temporary procedural techniques, unless employed in the service of some strategic aim. As a matter of priority - to get the heat out of the conflict - it may be useful to encourage the opponents in a conflict of this nature to discard inflammatory language, and in this sense to be less triumphalist. This, of itself, does not solve the question of the content of the subsequent discussion. The imperative to share religious truth, by whatever means may be considered to be appropriate at the time, is not easily gainsaid. Missionary activity is one of the chief characteristics of prophetic religion as Zaehner has noted.[1] It is quite possible to eschew the colourful language of triumphalism, and so to give the impression that real progress in mutual understanding is being made. This shift in attitude may, paradoxically, lead to a hardening of approach and to a reluctance to pass from a more eirenic social intercourse to the required level of conceptual analysis. But another way

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1. "Religious Truth", in Truth and Dialogue, ed. John Hick Sheldon, 1974, pp. 2-19.

forward remains, a way which appears to be logically possible in the light of an assertion which is common to Christianity and Islam, namely that God is one, and hence that Truth, Ultimate Reality, is a coherent unity. What needs to be explored here is the activity of witnessing to a commonly held view about the ontological unity of God.

It is difficult to see how Christians can be expected to subscribe ex animo, to an interpretation of the mission of Jesus (or how Muslims, mutatis mutandis) can be expected to consider the rasūlīya of Muhammad as an activity strictly limited in time and space. Concepts like prophecy, kerygma, belief and unbelief are also fundamental to both religions. It is difficult to relativise them. The attempt to do so may appear to be a useful expedient. Faced with apparent conflict, and committed to pluralism, the twentieth century observer is rather like Eliot's literary critic who-confronted by fresh luminaries in the literary firmament - sees it as his task,

> 'to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and the poems in a new order'.[1].

Eliot himself goes on to show that the critic is not excused the task of evaluation. A hierarchy, a scale of values, an order of magnitude and relatedness, remain. But to establish this relatedness is the function of criticism:

> 'This task is not one of revolution but of re-adjustment. What we observe is partly the same scene, but in a different and more distant perspective'.[2].

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1. "The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism", quoted in Selected Prose, (ed.) John Hayward, Penguin 1953, page 18.

2. ibid, p. 19.

The kind of relativism with regard to world religions which Professor Hick advocates may be criticised for being both simplistic and patronising. It is simplistic because it appears to take the easy way out, by according relative importance and value to different religious systems, almost by virtue of the fact that they exist. It is patronising because it gives the impression that we have reached a point of human evolution when the only acceptable way forward is to see the different systems of faith and practice as stepping-stones in the long path towards the development of a new and more critically-aware religious consciousness. This does less than justice either to Christian or to Muslim eschatology. The practising Christian or Muslim is not so easily let off the hook. The assertion that man has "come of age" falls within his existing understanding of the prophetic interpretation of contemporary events. In seeking to transcend the limitations of historically revealed religious truth, the principle of relativism begs the ultimate question, so far as prophetic religion is concerned. Both Christians and Muslims have to continue to live in a state of tension and expectancy, awaiting "the last Day" when, alone, the meaning of history will be made clear. Many factors may contribute to this tension. It is not only the growing awareness of other conflicting philosophical and religious options. It is also the constant reminder of personal inadequacy in living the life of faith. In this connection it is the activity of witnessing to the truth of one's religion which is of importance in the matter of dialogue. This includes, but is not exhausted by, the affirmation of propositional statements about theology.

It is the claim, both of Christianity and of Islam, that God has spoken to men in history, and that He continues to speak. It is the claim of both that in them God has spoken uniquely. The revelation takes on universal significance, a fact which demands proclamation "to the uttermost part of the earth".[1.]

On this Muslims and Christians may agree, namely, that men and women are required to submit their wills and purposes to the Divine Will and purpose. It is God Himself who has "sent signs" which are not to be ignored. To undertake to study the differences, in an attempt to deal with relatedness, may be paradoxical, but it needs to be attempted in order to guard against a premature acceptance of consensus. The success of the eirenic approach is not the extent to which no offence is given or taken. Differences and conflicting truth-claims may be faced honestly without surrendering personal conviction, and without being watered down. It is the spirit in which the discussion takes place which is all-important. It is no less difficult for the believing Christian or Muslim, than for the interested outsider, to achieve a proper degree of impartiality in a subject such as this. Indeed, it may be said that some-one who is neither a Christian nor a Muslim is ill-equipped to begin the task, except at a very superficial level.

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1. Acts, i, 8.

The spirit which is required for this activity is not the exclusive property of one or other religious system. In striving to go beyond the labels which men pin on themselves (or accept without demur), one realises that these systems are themselves so vast and complex as to make analysis virtually impossible. And if the only usefulness of such labels is to indicate a general and rather loose kind of affiliation, it would be better not to speak of encounter at all. What makes for fruitful encounter between Christian and Muslim[1]. is not an inherent quality which is unique, or common to both their religions, as religious systems, but the Spirit of God, strangely compelling, yet not coercing, which blows where it pleases.[2].

The emphasis is on personal, and individual, acts of witnessing. Prevented from engaging in more explicit forms of missionary work, the Christian, wherever he may find himself,[3].

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1. M.A.C. Warren, "The Encounter of Islam and Christianity in the 20th Century", Islamic Quarterly, vol. xiii, no. 2, pp. 108-9. See also "The Theology of Attention" by the same author in Face to Face: Essays on Inter-Faith Dialogue, Highway Press, 1971, pp. 16-32.

2. St. John, iii, 8. An important contribution to the discussion of "The Universal Spirit and the Meeting of Faiths", comes in John Taylor's The Go-Between God, SCM, 1973, in the chapter headed "Meeting", pp. 179-197.

3. Kenneth Cragg, "Die Kunst als Minorität zu leben", in Toleranz und Absolutheitsanspruch (ed. W. Höpfner). Breklum, 1975, pp. 27-37; see also D.C. Mulder, "Interpretation des Islam bei Kraemer und Cragg", ibid, pp. 38-50.

may use this approach to relate his experience to that of his neighbour, whenever the occasion arises. By being present in that situation, by listening and sharing, the individual participates in an activity for which there are few rules and precedents. He embarks on an "Uncharted Journey".[1.] It would appear to be a distinctively Christian attitude. Its openness, however, has been challenged by Muslims who have been known to question it as a tactical missionary ploy - as Christian mission conducted for understandable practical reasons, by other methods. This may be so. The Christian is under a number of constraints as he seeks to interpret the New Testament and the life of faith. Whatever may have been the ipsissima verba of Jesus, the early church (and Christians ever since) have taken the words of St. Matthew's Gospel[2.] as a dominical command, laying on the believer an obligation to proclaim the gospel to all.

Christian presence means attempting to understand. The deep convictions which sustain the life of the individual believer are put to a stern test.[3.]

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1. Roger Hooker, op.cit. In the Foreword to this booklet John Taylor places side by side two texts which have been taken to express two biblical attitudes to encounter with people of other cultures and religion. The first is, "Therefore, let us go forth to him outside the camp" (Hebrews xiii, 13). The other words in this verse, "bearing his reproach", add to the dimension of Christian presence in other communities. The second is, "Therefore, come out from them and be separate from them says the Lord". (2 Corinthians vi, 17). The whole chapter is helpful for an understanding of the attitude of "Christian reverence and presence".

2. Chapter xxviii, 19-20; cf. Acts, i, 8.

3. Hooker, op.cit. p. 42.

As has already been mentioned, the attitude of presence, bringing with it all the possibilities of reproach, misunderstanding and vulnerability, is distinctively, and perhaps uniquely, Christian. Is there evidence of a corresponding attitude of openness and vulnerability from the Muslim side? Are the words - the language in which the attitude is expressed - alien to, or unknown in, the vocabulary of a common language which is the pre-requisite of fruitful encounter? Is this Christian attitude (one might say, initiative), doomed to failure because it is premature? Is there evidence of a measure of reciprocity from Muslims at the personal level, which will encourage Christians to pursue a difficult task, encouraged by the experience of mutuality at a deep level?

Dialogue is a complex concept.[1.] The word is used here in the spirit of Warren's comment,

> '"Dialogue" does not involve any suspension of belief, but rather a deliberate suspension of any aggressive intention towards the other man whom one is concerned to meet. In "Dialogue" I am primarily concerned to listen to what the other has to tell me about himself and what he believes and why. I want to discover the secret by which he lives. Should he then show some curiosity about me I will try to satisfy him. But his success or mine is not to be judged by whether, as a result of our meeting, either of us is induced to change his Faith. "Dialogue" may prepare us to be so persuaded. That is a risk which those who take part in "dialogue" must be prepared to accept'.[2.]

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1. Lesslie Newbigin, "The Basis, Purpose and Manner of Inter-Faith Dialogue", in Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 30, pp. 253-270.

2. M.A.C. Warren, "The Encounter of Islam and Christianity in the 20th Century", in Islamic Quarterly, vol. xiii, no. 2, page 111.

Here is the vulnerability, the openness and the priority of action, well expressed about dialogue as the basis of Christian presence in mission.[1.]

In the foregoing analysis of Christian attitudes to Islam there are several distinct, and sometimes conflicting, themes. This merely reflects the complexity of inter-personal relationships, where interpretations of what is held to be true find vigorous expression. The analysis is of value as a means of disentangling different emphases. Its usefulness in helping to evaluate the attitudes, the achievements, and the weaknesses, of historical figures such as Crowther, Blyden and Miller, will be to point to the real difficulties which they had to face, and the methods they employed to solve the problems presented to them. The men whose careers are now to be examined lived too long, and learned too much, to be fitted neatly into any analytical schema. They were themselves complex characters, moving now in this direction, and now in that, in their dealings with Muslims. From time to time they changed attitudes, opinions and tactics, in such a way as to blur the edges of distinction in any nicely-contrived analysis. They have been accused of inconsistency and compromise. They have been praised for wisdom and courage. The time has come for re-appraisal, to see if a fuller picture emerges, but first it will be helpful to look at the historical background.

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1. See John Hick, Christian Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue, The second Younghusband lecture delivered in King's College, London, May 3rd 1977; R. Panikkar, The Intra-Religious Dialogue, Paulist Press, New York, 1978, pp. xi-xxviii, and page 73; R. Hooker, "Dialogue-Myth and Reality", in New Fire, Autumn 1975, vol. 3, no. 24, pp. 386-389.

2. The nineteenth century background to the work of Crowther, Blyden and Miller in West Africa.

The events discussed in this study span a period from the beginning of renewed Christian missionary activity in Yoruba-land, to its development in the areas surrounding the Niger, and thence into Hausaland, the heartland of West African Islam. They also coincide with a period which saw an intense re-vivification of Islam in Hausaland and beyond, and then a comparative decline from the standards and ideals encouraged by the reformer Shehu Usuman dan Fodio. These events took place within a period of intensive political, economic, social and religious change. It was a time of heroic endurance and high endeavour. The conflict of ideals and aspirations was conducted in an environment noted for its hostile climate and for the high in-[1]cidence of disease and death.

The nineteenth century did not mark the beginning of either Christianity or Islam in West Africa. What happened was that both faiths, renewed by vigorous missionary zeal, began to expand and present a challenge to traditional African religion which, for centuries, had guided the lives of indigenous peoples, far removed from the gaze of European eyes. The first Niger Expedition of 1841 was rather a reconnaissance which, inter alia, prepared the way for Christian mission in Nigeria. The achievements of European and African Christians on the West

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1. cf. Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions, Penguin, 1975, page 306. On the career of the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio, see Mervyn Hiskett, The Sword of Truth, Oxford 1973.

African coast during the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries is not easy to assess.[1] Portuguese, Italian and German missionaries laboured to spread the Gospel and to understand African ways of life. The earlier Roman Catholic missions in places like Benin and Warri failed for several reasons. First there was the stability of the ancient African traditions. Then there was the European's lack of resistance to tropical disease in what was rightly called 'the white man's grave'. A further factor was the continuing support given to the slave-trade by nations which described themselves as Christian.

In the nineteenth century two factors were decisive in establishing Christianity as a faith with a future in West Africa. First there was the wave of missionary enthusiasm, based largely on the evangelical revival in England. This ensured that there would be sufficient numbers of European missionaries who were prepared to make little of the formidable problems which faced them, because of their inner conviction about the way in which God was calling them. The second factor was the expansion of colonialism which made it possible for missionaries (and others) to stand with relative security in places which they would otherwise have been obliged to leave. The work of mission and the work of colonialism proceeded side by side, not always without conflict and mutual antagonism, but with a sufficient degree of urbanity to convince many influential

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1. See Ralph M. Wiltgen, Gold Coast Mission History, Techny, 1956; cf. Sir John Gray, Early Portuguese Missionaries in East Africa, London, 1958; W.G.L. Randles, L'ancien royaume du Congo, The Hague, 1968.

Africans that the former was the spiritual arm of the latter.

The British navy dominated the coastal approaches, but British naval guns could not range beyond a narrow strip of coast. Further inland life went on much as before. The Gospel was not accepted merely because Europeans appeared to commend it. There was no dramatic conversion to Christianity overnight. The change in the fortune and status of the missionaries came in the wake of military and administrative success.[1.]

Crowther's career continued for half a century, from 1841-1891, when he died - still in harness - but with his policy, plans and achievements increasingly misunderstood. During that period four other churches added their missionary presence. Apart from the Anglicans who worked through the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), there came to be four more missionary groups - each with distinctive theology and ecclesiastical polity. They operated for the most part in separate areas of Nigeria.[2.] Even so, not even their common resolve to serve God in the mission field by presenting the claims of the Gospel could conceal the denominational differences between them in the eyes of Africans.[3.]

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1. J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891, Longman, 1977, page xiii.

2. The use of the name Nigeria at this point is a convenient anachronism. See A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Who coined the name Nigeria?" in West Africa, 22 December 1956.

3. Crowther was very much aware of the effect which rival Christian theologies were having on Africans. See infra, page 88, footnote 1. He had a different attitude to Roman Catholic missions, however, infra, pp. 109 and 167.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, a committee of the English Methodist Conference, established a mission station in Badagry in 1842. The Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland started a mission in Calabar in 1846 under the leadership of Hope Waddell, who had pressed for such a venture five years previously. The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States sent missionaries to Ijaye in 1853. Their work extended into Yoruba-land only to cease with the outbreak of the American Civil War. They returned to make a new start in 1875. The Société des Missions Africaines (S.M.A.) brought Roman Catholics to the scene in 1867, but it was not until 1884 that another Catholic group, the Holy Ghost Fathers, arrived in the eastern part of Nigeria to work among the Ibos.[1.]

These different missions contributed to the total impact on Nigerian life of nineteenth century Christian thought and practice,[2.] but they were by no means equal partners in missionary enterprise. The scale of their activities varied. It can be argued that the Church Missionary Society - the society which Crowther served with such distinction - was the dominant partner throughout, by virtue of the prestige it enjoyed as the representative of the established church in England. Its supporters had the ear of the British government in a way not available to the other missionary societies. Crowther and Miller were both servants of C.M.S. Blyden was never a missionary in

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1. The Catholics, too, had problems because of wars at home. The Franco-Prussian War (and its legacy of civil strife in France) had a constraining effect on foreign missions.

2. cf. E.A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis. Longman, 1971, pp. 329-345.

the strict sense. His contribution, as the following pages will show, was uniquely independent, and in the course of time he came to question the work of missionary societies in a most radical manner.

From 1841 to 1853 the foundations of missionary work were laid along the coast, not too far from the protection afforded by Britain's naval presence. From the political point of view the climax of this phase came in 1851 with the bombardment and capture of Lagos by the British. The period from 1853 to 1860 was marked by further missionary penetration of Yorubaland and the start of work on the Niger in 1857. The period from 1860 to 1875 was one of frustration and difficulty for missionaries.[1.] Wars among the Yoruba, the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, not to mention local hostility against Europeans, provoked by the realisation that the capture of Lagos by the British was merely the prelude to British territorial designs, brought the activity of missionary expansion to a temporary halt. From 1875 to 1914 the influence of the missions grew as European imperialism gained strength. In addition to the development of Christian mission in the coastal city states, the Delta area, Yorubaland and the Niger territory, Christians began to seek access to the Muslim areas of the North. Here their policy came into conflict with the plans of British administrators. Nor was the path made easy by the local Muslim authorites.

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1. Missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta in 1867, and the movement of Europeans in Yorubaland was restricted.

One of the major consequences of this Christian endeavour was the education of a new Nigerian élite, educated in western methods of thinking, but increasingly conscious of their African roots.[1.] Their lingua franca was English, and they soon began to become involved in the processes which, within a few years of Miller's death, were to lead to full independence and national sovereignty. British colonial rule, by the end of the period under review, had brought the whole country under one administration, established boundaries, provided roads and railways, air transport, means of communication, a unified civil service, new cosmopolitan urban centres - and a firm base for the diffusion of religion. Christianity survived, not only in its more orthodox forms, but in the proliferation of numerous indigenous churches.[2.]

Christianity was not the only religion to flourish in this environment. By the end of the period both Islam and African Traditional Religion remained as well-established alternative world views - influencing the emergent national identity from different perspectives. As Christians, Crowther, Blyden and

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1. J.F.A. Ajayi, CMN, pp. 167-206.
2. This development lies beyond the scope of this study. In October 1980, Dr. Harold Turner plans to continue at the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, his pioneer work, begun at the University of Aberdeen. His work on PRONERM (Project for the Study of New Religious Movements) is not confined to Nigeria - or even to West Africa. It would be interesting to attempt to account for the fact that Christianity and Islam, both re-invigorated missionary faiths, which entered Nigeria from different sides at approximately the same time in the nineteenth century, have developed in very different ways. Mainstream Christianity exists side by side with many new indigenous churches, which express much more immediate local aspirations. Islam, on the other hand, retains a remarkable homogeneity and unity. See H.W. Turner, "The Study of the new religious movements in Africa, 1968-1975", in Religion vol. 6, Spring 1976, pp. 88-98.

Miller each had to attempt to understand these other religious traditions and to present their interpretation of the Gospel to peoples who were already steeped in corporate experience of the transcendental. How far they succeeded will be considered in the final chapter.

Reference to African Traditional Religion raises an important consideration which needs to be mentioned at this point. Until recently, comparatively little was known about the religious beliefs, practices, myths and traditions of the indigenous African peoples, to whom both Christianity and Islam came in time, as immigrant missionary faiths. It is now becoming much more apparent, not only how ancient these traditions are, but also how resilient and influential they were, even when the missionary zeal of Christians and Muslims was being sustained with great vigour. In spite of this observation it remains to be said that a detailed analysis of African Traditional Religion, seen as the matrix of African spirituality, finds no place in the present study. This is not because the subject is unimportant. It is rather because for both Crowther and Blyden - Miller was, for other reasons, pre-occupied with Islam - the indigenous traditions were obstacles to progress in the religious life. Their attitudes emerge as the study proceeds, and will be considered in relation to their thought as a whole, rather than to the critical revaluation which is now emerging as a result of the work of later scholars, many of whom are

themselves African.[1.]

Islam is a lively growth in black Africa, south of the Sahara. Like Christianity, Islam is no newcomer. Ever since the middle of the eleventh century A.D. the influence of Islam has been felt in West Africa. The religious zeal of those who came to be known as al-mulaththamūn "the veiled ones," and later still as al-murabiṭūn (Almoravids), "the people of the monastery fortress", brought to West Africa the influence of a reform movement in Islam which had its origins in the hearts of a group of Berber nomads who inhabited the western Sahara. Their reforming zeal led them to combat ignorance of Islam and apostasy by conquest. The struggle which ensued between the Almoravids and those who came to be known as al-muwaḥḥidūn "those who proclaim the unity of God" (Almohads), was a domestic matter which it is not necessary to detail here.[2.] Except, that is, to draw attention to two significant factors which bear upon an important theme of this study, with reference to the subsequent development of Islam in a West African setting. As more and more Muslims became dispersed throughout the Maghrib and the Western Sudan they helped to spread far and wide a culture based on the Arabic language. Apart from the hitherto unparalleled flowering of culture

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1. See, for example, E. Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion, A Definition, SCM, London, 1973. Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, Longmans, 1962; John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Heinemann, 1969. Concepts of God in Africa, SPCK, London, 1970. Introduction to African Religion, Heinemann, 1975. Prayer and Spirituality in African Religion, the Charles Strong Memorial Lecture, Flinders University, South Australia, 1978; B.C. Ray, African Religions, Symbol, Ritual and Community, Prentice-Hall, 1976.

2. See Roger le Tourneau, "North Africa to the Sixteenth Century," in CHI, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 222ff; P.K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, Macmillan (10th edition) 1973, pp. 541-549.

there arose out of the theological interplay between Almoravids and Almohads two formative influences for West African Islam.[1] First the dominance of the Mālikī madhhab deriving from the school of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) associated with the Muslim jurist Mālik b. Anas.[2] The Mālikism which prevailed, established in a formal way the structure of a conservative and austere legal framework for Islam, which - even though it may have led to a perfunctory and uncritical performance of religious duty at times when the spirit of Islam appeared to be absent - nonetheless provided a succession of reforming Muslim zealots with the basis on which to make their passionate appeals for jihād. The second decisive factor in the development of Islam in West Africa was the largely inexplicable rise, and continuing popularity, of popular Sufism. This took the form of localised communities, based on the life-style and teaching of holy men, who emphasised the mystical side of man's experience of God in a way which a more orthodox Islam did not countenance - and, in fact, frequently repudiated. The ṭarīqāt, these schools of Muslim mysticism, with their sharing of a common life, were based upon a distinct regula. Long after the death of the founders of such ṭarīqāt these localised groups continued to flourish, and to hand on the insights of

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1. The resilience of Mālikism (to which the Almoravids held) was demonstrated by the fact that it prevailed even though the Almohads opposed it. This furnishes another interesting example of a paradox by which the victor sometimes appears to prevail at all points save the most critical.

2. SEI, pp. 320-324. This article provides the background for a study of the Mālikī madhhab.

their founders. The point to note here is that these cells of spiritual activity, clinging to their traditions in times of general spiritual decline, also functioned as centres for renewal, providing indigenous centres for the spiritual renewal of Islam.

Yet by the close of the sixteenth century there was little evidence to show that the brotherhood of Islam was a reality throughout the area. Various ethnic groups, even those which confessed to a common bond in Islam, and which might have been expected to lay more emphasis on the supra-tribal claims of the umma, were engaged in the kinds of activity which Islam was intended to eradicate. This pre-Islamic lust for booty, this rapacity, and this inter-tribal feuding, are indices of the failure of Islam to penetrate the life of the savannah-dwelling agrarian peoples. Only the nomads and semi-nomads (Tuareg and Fulbe) held to Islam, living as they did for the most part in the more distant and remote parts of the sahil. It was from the descendants of this group that there went out a new and vigorous wave of islamicization, which reached its peak in the muslim jihads[1] of the nineteenth century, and against the back-

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1. jihād remains a religious duty for Muslims generally. It is in the manner of its operation that controversy has arisen, as fard ʿala 'l-kifayah. It is naive to pretend that jihad has not been interpreted as holy war, as a purging by blood of that which is held to be offensive to God (See Ibn Jubayr, Al-riḥla "The lands of God (i.e. Islamic lands) that most deserve to be purified by the sword and cleansed of their sins and impurities by blood shed in holy war, are these Hejaz lands, for what they are about in loosening the ties of Islam and dispossessing the pilgrims of their property and shedding their blood", Anthology of Islamic Literature, ed. James Kritzeck, Penguin Books, 1964, p. 228). Nevertheless it would be alien to the spirit of understanding to refuse to acknowledge what Muslims have always asserted to be the spiritual basis of jihād, namely the striving to the best of one's ability to commend the truth of Islam, by whatever means. Jihad in this sense remains a permanent feature of Islam.

ground of which the Christian mission, exemplified by Crowther, Blyden and Miller had to contend.[1.]

West Africa felt the impact of a number of expatriate groups in the nineteenth century. To a large extent these groups remained unaware of the ancient and diverse indigenous cultural life of the people they had come to serve, to administer, to educate, to heal, to save - and even to exploit. Europe had been exhausted by the ferocity of the Napoleonic Wars, but with the advent of a period of stability, based on the growing imperial power of Britain, fresh opportunities for satisfying the competitive instinct were afforded to Europeans in far distant places. Denied satisfaction on more conventional fields of battle, the powers of Europe turned to political and mercantile expansion in foreign parts. The vast, largely unexplored, and "dark", continent of Africa offered rich pickings. The European annexation of huge areas of the African land mass has its own darker side, but by no means all the expatriates who directed their attention to Africa came as adventurers in pursuit of personal gain.[2.] The darkness in which Africa was shrouded was the darkness of western ignorance.[3.] The Europeans who came

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1. See Mervyn Hiskett, The Sword of Truth, Oxford, 1973; M.G. Smith, "The Jihād of Shehu Dan Fodio: Some Problems", in Islam in Tropical Africa, (ed. I.M. Lewis) Oxford 1969, pp. 408-420.
   The decisive period of Muslim activity was between the years 1804 and 1831.
2. H.M. Stanley, In Darkest Africa, 2 vols, London, 1890.
3. Just before the end of the nineteenth century the West Coast had been described as "one universal den of desolation, misery and crime", Eugene Stock, History of the Church Missionary Society, vol. 1, London, 1899, page 45.

had to learn humility, but, in their turn, they gave to Africa - often at great personal cost, and with no little devotion - from their own knowledge and expertise.

For those interested in the subtleties of political power and in the administrative challenge provided by colonial expansion, the appeal of Africa was irresistible. For those preoccupied with the development of trade and commerce the continent was full of rich potential. For those, fewer in number, perhaps, but significant because of their single-minded devotion to the spiritual as well as the material needs of what they considered to be pagan people, Africa presented an awesome sphere for service, and - if need be - for martyrdom, either at the hands of unregenerate natives, or from one of the many strange diseases to which Europeans - for all their vaunted cultural ascendancy - were particularly prone.

Of these groups, three are of particular interest in the present study. The first group of European expatriates consisted of administrators and officials charged with the responsibilities of government. However remote their postings, they could count - to some extent - on effective military support when the situation required. This comforting demonstration of colonial power may have been both less apparent and less real, the deeper into the interior the administrative penetration was, but its psychological value remained. The second group of Europeans consisted of entrepreneurs, who left home to make their fortunes - as they dreamed - in the untapped markets of the African bush. Some did make their fortunes,

establishing impressive commercial empires of their own, and providing a solid basis for the economic development of countries which, within a century, would appropriate the major share of control and direction, following the assumption of independent nationhood.[1.] In the stereotyped analysis of popular discussion these merchant adventurers (or traders, as they were almost universally known throughout West Africa), were frequently the villains of the piece. They were considered to be out for whatever they could get, at whatever cost to the people of Africa. Their achievements in building up the complex structures of commerce, industry and general business practice is sometimes overlooked or disparaged.[2.]

The third group of Europeans was that of the missionaries and their families. Christian missionary activity began in earnest at the end of the eighteenth century, at least as far as the reformed churches were concerned. Supported by the prayers and limited funding of their parent communities in Europe, successive waves of Christian clergy and laity found their way to some of the most inhospitable locations in Africa

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1. See, for example, the life and work of John Holt (1841-1915), founder and first Chairman of John Holt and Co., (Liverpool) Limited, in Merchant Adventure, prepared and published by The Company in 1955. See also, The John Holt Papers, now lodged in the archives of Rhodes House, Oxford; and Cherry Gertzel, John Holt: A British Merchant in West Africa in the Era of Imperialism, D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1959.

2. For a more favourable view of traders, see Mary H. Kingsley, Travels in West Africa, new edition, ed. Elspeth Huxley, London, 1976, page 11.

and elsewhere. Although they came to win souls for Christ, and, incidentally, to bring the benefits of western medicine and education, they did not come speaking one voice. The impact of their presence in Africa, and the confusion and conflict of their various sectarian emphases, have recently been the subject of investigation on the part of African scholars.[1.]

It was into a West Africa, increasingly influenced by the various, and often conflicting, ambitions of expatriate administrators, entrepreneurs, and missionaries, that Crowther, Blyden and Miller came. Although all three were drawn to West Africa for similar reasons, to bring what they considered to be the enlightenment of the Christian Gospel to those in need of it, their motives were different. Throughout the course of unusually long careers, the complexity of their developing internal struggles, and of their relationships with colleagues, friends and opponents, provides a fascinating picture of the peculiarly lonely and isolated life of the long-term servant of Christian mission.

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1. See E.A. Ayandele, MIMN, pp. 329-345.

3. Samuel Crowther: the Liberated Slave.

'I had been well drilled, as I then thought, by reading and collecting arguments against Mohammedanism and heathenism, and went out with zeal, not yet tempered with experience, thinking I could carry everything before me among my Mohammedan and heathen countrymen by my knowledge after my own conversion to the true religion...'[1].

'...Our experience ought not to be lost to the young and rising generation who are to be our successors in the evangelization of the West Coast of Africa, where Mohammedanism prevails to a very great extent'.[2].

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1. S.A. Crowther, Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa, S.P.C.K. London, 1892, page 6, hereafter EHM.

2. ibid, page 28.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther has long been recognised as one of the principal architects of modern West Africa. Long before his European mentors, who encouraged him to pursue an often lonely course in Yorubaland and in the Niger territory, he was obliged to recognise that Christian missionary endeavour in West Africa was complicated by factors scarcely acknowledged, and dimly understood, in Europe. The peoples of West Africa were not without their own experience of the world of spirit, of the claims made upon them by the gods with whom they had a lively relationship, or of the supreme deity to whose will all must conform.[1.] Nor was the light of Christianity to be directed in any way other than through the prism of African religious consciousness. European thought-forms were not adequate to the purpose. Throughout the period of his missionary activity Crowther had to grapple with the long-established indigenous religious traditions of the people, as well as with the claims of Islam.

Crowther's work has to be seen against the background of these already established patterns of religious observance, moral action and social intercourse.[2.] He was a pioneer of Christian mission. The critical question, however, is this. To what extent - if any - was he a pioneer in the Christian understanding of Islam? Throughout his adult life he remained firmly attached to faith in Christ. His faith developed,

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1. On this, see, e.g., J. Olowo Ojoade, "God in Nigerian Proverbs", in Nigerian Field, vol. 43, part 4, December, 1978, pp. 171-177.

2. cf. Ajayi, J.F.A., and Ayandele, E.A., "Emerging Themes in Nigerian and West African Religious History", JAS, vol. 1, no. 1, 1974, page 6, footnote 5, "Igbagbo ko wipe ki a ma se oro ile eni", i.e., Christianity does not forbid patronage of the family's divinity.

matured and sought appropriate expression in an African setting. It is important to recognise this continuing thread of what may still be described as Christian orthodoxy. Belief in God and belief in Christ remained the twin pillars of his faith. Put into more technical theological language the point may be expressed by noting that his faith developed in recognisably trinitarian formulations (with respect to God) and incarnational formulations (with respect to Jesus).

The date of his birth is not precisely known. His birth is thought to have taken place in 1806, in Oshogun. He was a pure Yoruba, with royal ancestors on both his father's and his mother's side. He was a great great-grandson of the Yoruba king, Abiodun. From his mother he inherited not only royal blood, tracing back to the same Abiodun, but the influence of her unique quality as Afala, a title by which she was recognised as a special servant of a great god.[1.] His family had grown wealthy through the success of their cloth-weaving, and their affluence was augmented by the successful farming of the family land.

From the beginning Crowther seems to have been singled out from the ordinary. His parents gave him the name Ajayi, which testified to the unusual nature of his birth. The name is given only to a child born with his face to the ground. The circumstance was rare enough to suggest the uniqueness of the child concerned. From the beginning his people expected his

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1. i.e. princess/priestess of Obatala. The god Obatala, "Lord of the White Cloth", whose distinctive raiment it was the responsibility of Afala to keep clean.

life to be remarkable. This prompted his parents to visit the Ifa shrine, dedicated to the god of divination, whose priest delivered an oracle which confirmed the boy's new status in the community.[1.]

> 'My parents were heathens, and, of course, I was brought up in heathenism, and would in all probability have become an Ifa priest, as an Ifa priest was particularly fond of me, who used to employ my services very often at the time of asking counsel of the oracles by casting lots'.[2.]

The Ifa priest whose services the boy's parents sought, delivered an oracle which set Ajayi further apart.

> 'The priest declared that on no account was the child to be a devotee of any idol worship, for he was destined to be an Aluja, that is, one celebrated and distinguished, to serve the great and highest God and no idol whatever. By this he implied the principal deity, spoken of as Olorun, the maker of heaven and earth, the great sky god, a sort of deified firmament'.[3.]

This interesting prediction was, as Crowther himself frequently noted, eventually significant in a way which the Yoruba priest presumably did not suspect. For Crowther, the service of the highest God took on a new meaning after his conversion to Christianity. Following his return to his own Yoruba people he seems to have been able to exploit what was taken as the miracle of his restoration to them after many years, by reminding them of the service adumbrated for him in the tradition from which he came.

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1. Still the most readable and authoritative account of Crowther's life and career (apart from his own letters and journals) is Jesse Page's The Black Bishop: Samuel Adjai Crowther, Hodder and Stoughton, 1908. So far no major critical biography of Crowther has appeared. For some years students have been waiting for the completion of Professor Ajayi's biography, see "Emerging Themes in Nigerian and West African Religious History", J.F.A. Ajayi and E.A. Ayandele, JAS, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1974, page 9.

2. EHM, page 6; see also TBB, pp. 1-33.

3. TBB, page 5.

It was not long before the Yoruba community to which he belonged was attacked by Yoruba Muslims who were after slaves and booty.[1.] The story of the attack on his village, his capture, enslavement, separation from his family and eventual liberation from the crew of the Portuguese vessel Esperanza Felix by British sailors, is told in a long letter written in college in Fourah Bay.[2.]

The town of Oshogun was not well prepared for defence. A crude wooden fence some four miles in circumference surrounded a community of 12,000 inhabitants, of whom about 3,000 were capable of fighting. Men, women and children were taken by the Eyo Muslims, individually roped at the neck and herded south to the coast into slavery. Crowther was among them.[3.]

After a circuitous trek the slaves and their conquerors arrived in Popo (Dahomey), the centre of the Portuguese slave-trade. The experiences of close confinement, of the atrocities of the guards and of separation from their own families, led to the suicide of many slaves. Crowther attempted to kill himself, a temptation which haunted him in later life. In Lagos he and another group of slaves fell into the hands of Portuguese slave-dealers. With a group of other slaves he was placed on board the Esperanza Felix. On April 18th 1822 the Portuguese

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1. For the period of his early life in Oshogun, up to his capture in 1821 see "Bishop Crowther: an assessment", J.F.A. Ajayi, in Odu, New Series, vol. 4, 1970, pp. 4-6.

2. A long extract is provided in TBB pp. 9-17.

3. TBB, page 10. The year was 1821.

ship was intercepted by two British naval vessels, and the slaves were liberated.[1.]

The slave-trade in negroes was not a European innovation in West Africa. For centuries the Tuareg had used slaves in the Sahara. This internal trade in human beings, the inhumanity of which was remarked by men like Barth and Denham,[2.] was centred on places such as Katsina and Kano. These cities were still important slave-markets in the nineteenth century. The trans-Saharan trade routes shipped human merchandise to the Mediterranean littoral. The death rate was high. So long as Muslim raiding parties and guides refrained from enslaving fellow Muslims the trade could usefully proceed without contravening the requirements of the shari^{c}a. Prior to its extension by Europeans this trade in human beings seldom penetrated the fastnesses of the southern tropical forest. The axis of trade was north/south, across the Sahara. With the incursion of the Europeans, beginning with the Portuguese and then including French and British interests, the slave trade gained lucrative outlets on the southern coast. The Atlantic displaced the Sahara as the principal hazard for slaves, and their mortality rate was high. In all this, black slaves from the central and southern parts of the tropical rain forest fell victims - as did Crowther - to an unlikely liaison between expatriate Europeans and Africans from the interior whose espousal

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1. Crowther was taken aboard the Myrmidon, commanded by Captain (later Admiral Sir) H.G. Leeke. The other vessel concerned with the rescue was the Iphigenia, commanded by Captain Sir Robert Mends.

2. See infra, note 2, page 82 ; note 2 page 110.

of Islam, far from inhibiting the practice of slavery, appeared to provide for it some theological justification.

By 1800 most slaves were for sale overseas. Crowther, captured in 1821, was sold from hand to hand, until in Lagos he fell into the hands of a white trader. The arc of territory around the Bight of Benin (including the coastal and inland areas of Angola, the Cameroons and Nigeria) was a rich source of slaves. The movement to abolish slavery, a movement associated with names such as Wilberforce, Clarkson Sharp and Fowell-Buxton had not won its final victories in Nigeria, even as late as the beginning of the twentieth century, to judge from an exchange with a northern Nigerian Emir.[1] A link between black and white, based not on the exploitation of human misery for monetary gain, but on an understanding of the Christian gospel, was forged with the liberation of Crowther. It was he who spent five decades attempting to help Africans to understand that Europeans had more to offer than repression, and to assist whites to recognise that Africans were capable of responding to the stimulus of education and that they had developed religious beliefs of their own.

The period of slavery, however brief, was undoubtedly formative in Crowther's life. Brought up to serve the cult of Obatala, and conscious of the inescapable presence of mysterious spiritual forces, of which the sacred tree or the fierce tropical storm

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1. When taken by the British, the Emir of Kontagora is quoted as having defended his slaving activities as a normal activity, "Can you stop a cat from mousing? I shall die with a slave in my mouth". See J.D. Anderson, West Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Heinemann, 1972, pp. 36ff.

were the constant or returning witnesses, he moved-within the space of a few years - from the self-contained integration of an African tribal group into a new world in which the two major forces were Christianity and Islam.[1.] It was a Muslim raiding-party which enslaved him and his co-religionists. What no Muslim could inflict on another Muslim, without betraying the community of Islam, was permitted to Muslims in tropical Africa, where the victims were non-Muslims. This lesson was soon learnt by Crowther, whose vision of the universal brotherhood of mankind, based upon the love of Christ, remained in sharp contrast to what he saw as the exclusive privileges offered within Islam. His release by the British was a consequence of the policy designed to break up the slave-trade. Those who campaigned against the practice saw slaving as an affront to the dignity accorded to man, for God had redeemed all, in Christ.

These three factors - the direct experience of African traditional religion, the impact of Islam on the non-Muslim, and the liberation of slaves in the name of Christianity - continued to influence Crowther throughout his own long ministry. Redemption and deliverance were to remain key concepts. The foundations for his own understanding of Christianity were laid in Sierra Leone where he was taken as a freed slave by the British ship which liberated him at sea. Even here, as his education in a Christian school progressed, he was brought into contact with Islam.

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1. cf. "Samuel Crowther of Oyo", J.F.A. Ajayi, in Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the era of the slave-trade, (ed.) P.D. Curtin, University of Wisconsin/Ibadan University Press, 1967, pp. 289-316.

After his liberation Crowther was taken, together with other freed slaves to Bathurst, a few miles from Freetown in Sierra Leone.[1.] The founding of the Colony of Sierra Leone was intended to create, in Granville Sharpe's phrase, a "province of freedom", a haven from the slave-trade.[2.] There, Crowther was placed in the care, and under the tuition, of a missionary teacher called Davey. Mission work in Sierra Leone had by then been pioneered by the Church Missionary Society for a decade and a half. This Christian initiative from Europe was the fruit of pressure to abolish slavery.

Under the guidance of Davey and his wife, Crowther's education progressed. The theoretical and practical sides of education were not neglected. In both he showed himself adept. As his proficiency in reading and study increased, so did his skill in carpentry develop. And this practical skill was added to his knowledge of the kind of agriculture and animal husbandry

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1. The C.M.S. began its work in Sierra Leone in 1804. The date is worth recalling, given the focus of the present study. It was in the same year that the Muslim jihad of Usuman dan Fodio began in the north. Both Christianity and Islam began to be re-invigorated, and presented to the "pagans" with evangelical fervour, at the same time. To begin with, these movements were isolated in their respective spheres of interest, Christianity on the coast, bordering on the southern fringes of the tropical rain forest, Islam to the north in the sub-Saharan savannah. The Bathurst mentioned here is not to be confused with Bathurst in the Gambia, much further west.

2. Decisive dates in the abolition of slavery are 1807 when the British parliament abolished the trade in slaves, 1834 when slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire, and 1865 when the practice was made illegal by the government of the United States.

appropriate to a West African community.[1] All this was preparation for the event in his life which was to be the turning point. He was baptized and received into the church on 11 December 1825. To his own name of Ajayi were added the names of Samuel Crowther.[2] His conversion was decisive and it led to a life-time of concentrated missionary endeavour.

Crowther's forced removal from Yorubaland, his liberation, and his conversion to Christianity were closely connected in time. They were in the nature of what some Muslims, speaking of their own experience - and relating it to that of the prophet Muhammad - have termed hijra, that is, a migration which, though it may have a geographical focus, is much more an expression of inner-movement, a true metanoia. In Crowther's case his conversion was the turning point, sealed by baptism. But it was a culmination of events, interpreted as evidence of divine providence, in which apparently disparate experiences became fused in a synthesis of faith. To an outside observer it may seem that there is discontinuity between the life lived in an African tribal community, the disruption of that life by maraud-ing Muslims, and the consequent repudiation of both African traditional religion and Islam, which conversion to Christianity required of Crowther. But these different experiences were considered by him as stages in a continuum.[3]

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1. Prior to his capture by the slavers, he had his own strip of land on which yams were cultivated. He also kept fowls. TBB, pp. 6-7.

2. It was customary to name a convert after a European Christian. In this case the name was that of the Rev. Samuel Crowther, vicar of Christ Church, Newgate Street, London, a founder committee member of C.M.S.

3. For another point of view see P.R. McKenzie, Inter-Religious Encounter in West Africa, Leicester, 1976, pp. 14-15.

Over 1,000 men and women, negroes - either African or of African descent - arrived from Nova Scotia in 1792. They had known slavery in the country from which they came. It was not long before the immigrants discovered that the reality of life in the Colony was far removed from their aspirations. Far from becoming the model of a Christian community in Africa, the Colony became a place of strife and suspicion - a disappointment alike to those who came to find a new life and to those Europeans who had supported its foundation. It was in this melting pot of human experience that Crowther had to make his way.[1.]

In 1826 Crowther made his first visit to England, in the company of his teacher, Davey, and Mrs. Davey. He landed at Portsmouth on 16th August. For eight months he attended a parochial school in Islington, before returning to Sierra Leone with his mentors. The year 1827 saw the foundation of Fourah Bay College for the higher education of Africans by the Church Missionary Society. The first student entered on the roll was Crowther.[2.] The foundation of this College reflected

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1. 'The effect of the British blockade on slave ships had been to land many slaves at Freetown in Sierra Leone, a Protestant stronghold since its foundation by returned black Nova Scotians. Fourah Bay College was set up by the CMS for their education and soon some among them were returning to evangelise their own peoples along the coast. The impact of this upon the character of West African Coastal Christianity was, all in all, immense and it was almost entirely a Protestant one: a few returned Catholics from Brazil should not be forgotten for their influence in Dahomey or Lagos, but they did not turn into evangelists as did many of their Protestant cousins from Freetown... (the latter) ensured that West African Christianity would have at first a strongly Protestant ethos'. Adrian Hastings, in History of African Missions 1950-1975, Cambridge, 1979, page 40.

2. P.E.H. Hair notes, 'Crowther was one of the first year students at the Institution; that his was the first name on the roll is perhaps only a pious legend'. The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, Cambridge, 1967, footnote no. 21, page 7.

an important change in the missionary strategy of the founding body. The first two decades of expatriate activity in Sierra Leone had seen the numbers of missionaries and their dependents decimated by disease. Not surprisingly the C.M.S. committee concluded that if evangelisation was to proceed it would have to be through the agency of indigenous Christians. They needed to be carefully selected, educated, and prepared for mission. Their resistance to local disease was greater, and their understanding of the needs of their people better informed.

The first director of the College was the German Lutheran missionary, the Rev. Charles Haensel.[1.] The premises were poor and the regime strict.

Haensel's concern for Crowther was according to his lights, but in spite of a rather patronising attitude he soon came to recognize his new student's capacities, with singular perception.

> 'He is a lad of uncommon ability, steady conduct, a thirst for knowledge, and indefatigable industry'.[2.]

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1. In 1876 the College was affiliated to the University of Durham. This enabled African students to read for Durham degrees without leaving Africa. Stephen Neill, (op.cit. page 306) writes, 'The failure adequately to support and maintain their great institution (later affiliated to Durham University) reflects grave discredit on British Christianity. Yet, in spite of all the handicaps of inadequate staffing and miserable penury, Fourah Bay till the end of the nineteenth century and after educated the majority of those Africans who have made the history of English-speaking West Africa'.

2. TBB, page 41.

In 1829 Crowther married another liberated slave who had been given the name of Susan Thompson at baptism. Like him she had been rescued at sea and put ashore in Sierra Leone in 1822. Her education had begun then, and by the time of her marriage to Crowther she had become sufficiently proficient to teach others. He still had to ask for permission to marry. This was given. To begin with he was appointed second master at a school at Regent. His salary was £2 a month. In 1834 he went back to Fourah Bay College as a tutor. He did not neglect his own studies. During this period a firm conviction developed that he should serve his own people.

> 'I have begun to study the Greek language. I learned some time ago, through the aid of Mr. Schlenker, the declensions of nouns and adjectives and the conjugation of verbs; the only books I have are Parkhurst's 'Greek Lexicon' and a Greek Testament. I hope, by God's blessing, that I shall soon be able to understand the Word of God in that language, in which it was first written by the evangelists and apostles'.[1]

This language work opened up for Crowther the kind of Biblical study with which his European colleagues were already familiar. In addition he could already claim a competence in several African languages, which they were unable to match, and which gave him an advantage in the proclamation of the Gospel to several different ethnic groups in his locality. The college at which he studied offered a variety of subjects in support of its principal objective which was, "training in spirituality, in Christian piety, and in evangelism". The life

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1. TBB, pp. 44-45, quoting a letter dated 3 July 1840. cf. Blyden's more sophisticated approach as evidenced by his correspondence with W.E. Gladstone, see Hollis Lynch, EWB, page 14.

was not easy, for

> 'besides English, the students learnt four other vernaculars (Yoruba, Ibo, Temne, Mende) spoken commonly in the Colony so that they preached and addressed with some degree of proficiency in those vernaculars'.[1.]

This training and preparation made Crowther well-suited for his future missionary activity. Throughout his long career he took note of the religious beliefs and practices of the peoples among whom he moved. He was soon given an opportunity to gain some practical experience. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's analysis of the new openings for legitimate trade in West Africa, following the abolition of the slave-trade,[2.] prompted an initiative which was to end in failure. Lord John Russell, the British Colonial Secretary, proposed an expedition up the river Niger in a letter dated 26 December 1839, sent to the Lords of the Treasury in London. The expedition was designed to explore the possibilities for opening up the area to trade and commerce. At least one other agency was interested, but for different reasons. The Church Missionary Society obtained permission for two of its representatives to accompany the expedition in order to advise the society about establishing

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1. The life was not all study. The students were offered cricket, football and hockey. There was also a flourishing debating society. See E.M.T. Epelle, Bishops in the Niger Delta, Aba, 1964, page 16.

2. The African Slave Trade and its Remedy, London, 1840.

missionary work. The senior representative was the Rev. J.F. Schön.[1.] The other was Crowther, who at that time, late in 1839, was still working as a teacher at Fourah Bay. Russell's proposal made no mention of the opportunities for opening up the territory to ministers of the Gospel.

The sponsors of the 1841 Niger expedition were members of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa. Thomas Buxton was one of its most influential members. The specific objectives of the expedition were to promote trade,[2.] to link up with local chiefs and - wherever possible - to conclude treaties, to establish a model agricultural farm,[3.] to survey the principal languages, to introduce western medicine, to build roads and canals and

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1. Schön had spent ten years in Sierra Leone as a missionary, and had become a good linguist. The details of the expedition are contained in Journals of the Rev. J.F. Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther, who with the Sanction of Her Majesty's Government, accompanied the expedition up the Niger in 1841 on behalf of the Church Missionary Society, London, 1842. Further information is provided by W. Simpson in A Private Journal kept during the Niger Expedition 1841-2, from May 1841, to June, 1842. London, 1843.

2. The Liverpool trader Macgregor Laird pioneered the attempt to open up trade with the interior. In 1832 he financed an expedition up the Niger. Two vessels, both iron steam-ships (the Quorra and the Alburkah) reached a point north of the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, but malaria took the lives of 39 of the 48 on board.

3. The suggestion was an obvious attempt to provide help where it was considered to be needed. The idea came from Commander William Allen, who sailed with the unsuccessful expedition organised by Laird in 1832. Over a century later, the model farm at Asaba, on the western bank of the Niger, across from Onitsha, was still functioning as an example of how western methods could be adapted to the local situation with regard to livestock.

to introduce the printing press. This ambitious programme was entrusted to 145 Europeans - and Crowther - who embarked on three ships, the Albert, the Sudan and the Wilberforce. The measure of official support and public enthusiasm for the project is indicated by the fact that the Prince Consort gave the expedition a send-off at Exeter Hall.

The three iron ships sailed for the West coast of Africa, with Schön on Wilberforce and Crowther on board the Sudan. Their brief was also clear, and not in conflict with the specific objectives of the main party. They were charged to promote the policy of "Bible and Plough".[1] Hitherto missionaries had been unable to penetrate the interior and remain there. Now that the government of Britain was beginning to take an interest it was possible for missionaries to establish their work. In the short term this was important for the expansion of mission. In the long term, it came to be felt by some Africans that the ending of colonial ties also required the surrender of the religion so closely linked with imperialist expansion.

The expedition of 1841 is vividly and poignantly described in the diary of Schön, but Crowther too set down his thoughts.[2] Between July and September 130 of the Europeans on board the

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1. The idea came from Thomas Buxton, "It is the Bible and the Plough that must regenerate Africa". op.cit. pp. 282, 511.

2. Extracts of Crowther's Journal are given in TBB, pp. 52-67.

three ships fell victims to malaria, and 40 of these died.

> 'In order to keep a sufficient supply of fuel for the stoke-holes of the ships, green woods were stored in the hold of the vessels, which in progress of rapid decomposition, filled the ships with malarial germs (sic)... As for Crowther his health remained unimpaired'.[1].

When in October, the last remaining ship - the Albert - turned back, it seemed as if the expedition had been a complete failure.[2]. The ship came down the Niger, carried along by a fast current, its decks strewn with sick men. The ship's doctor, Stanger, attempted to manage the ship, dividing his time between the calls of the sick and the engines. His knowledge of the latter came from a book taken from the cabin of the dead captain. To Victorian sensibilities this was all heroic stuff - another chapter in the difficult and dangerous process of civilising the darkest places on earth. The loss of life among those who took part in the expedition, and the premature return of the survivors, were sufficient evidence for Victorian opinion that the episode was a failure. Another view has been taken recently. C.C. Ifemesia argues that the expedition was near to success, and that even in its apparent failure, it was able to,

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1. E.M.T. Epelle op.cit. page 19. The suggestion about the location of "malarial germs" was Crowther's, based upon his own observation. On subsequent expeditions his advice was taken, to the extent of isolating the offending wood for the ship's boilers by towing it on barges. It was even claimed that this precautionary measure significantly reduced the amount of fever suffered by those on board.

2. And that was the view which was held until quite recently. See J.D. Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, London, 1963, page 35.

> 'set the pattern for subsequent ventures which eventually led to the British occupation of the entire country (Nigeria) at the turn of the twentieth century'.[1].

A life-long friendship was forged between Schön and Crowther. It can be said that the fruitful liaison between these two men makes it impossible to write the expedition off as a total failure. As a result of his experiences in 1841 Schön came to the conclusion that Nigeria would have to be evangelized by Africans, because Europeans could only survive the climate with difficulty. In Crowther, Schön had found an African who might undertake the work of mission. Back in Sierra Leone there were other Africans who could be trained to help. The result of this was that the mission to the Niger was, from the first, a predominantly <u>African</u> mission. This was a radical change of missionary policy which some Europeans found it hard to accept. In the event, the year 1841 also saw the appointment of Henry Venn as Secretary of C.M.S. He supported the new policy of Africanisation, and backed Crowther, especially when the latter was appointed the first black bishop of modern times, in 1864.

Crowther's experiences on the expedition of 1841 provided several lessons. At first hand he observed the vulnerability of Europeans to tropical sickness. He noted his own capacity to withstand the ravages of fever. This, allied to his growing

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1. "The 'Civilising' Mission of 1841: Aspects of an Episode in Anglo-Nigerian Relations", in <u>JHSN</u>, 1962, pp. 291-310; '... Whatever were the opinions of Buxton's critics, the British missionaries (especially the Church Missionary Society) never believed that the expedition was a total failure'. <u>ibid</u>, page 310. For a different view see Robert Jamieson, <u>An Appeal to the Government and People of Great Britain against the proposed Niger Expedition</u>, London, 1840.

conviction that he should devote himself to Christian mission among his own people suggested a further course of preparation which was to culminate in his ordination to the priesthood of the Anglican church in October 1843.[1.] No converts to Christianity had been made during the course of the Niger expedition, but the ignorance and superstition (as Crowther saw it) of the people, with whom he came into contact in 1841, left a deep impression on him. After nineteen years away from his own country he appeared to have his views about the inadequacy of traditional religion confirmed when he returned.

> 'There was another circumstance which damped my spirits and tarnished my amusement at the pleasing sight of the villages above mentioned. Among the spectators of our steamers was an old woman who was bowing down to the ground, kissing her hands, and then looking up with great seriousness, as if she were asking for some protection from the gods; whether she was performing this act of worship to the figure in front of the ship, or to the steamer itself, was not certain'.[2.]

The Niger expedition had been an important turning point in Crowther's development. It led to his second visit to England, during which he was ordained. The singular testimony of Schön to his abilities helped to persuade the Anglican authorities to proceed with Crowther's further training.[3.]

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1. He was admitted to the diaconate on 11 June 1843 (Trinity Sunday) by Bishop Blomfield, in London. He was the first African to be ordained for service with the C.M.S.

2. C.M.S. Journal, 1841 pp. 30ff; ibid, pp. 23, 41, 56, 64, 72; TBB, pp. 57ff.

3. TBB, page 26.

Such testimonials as these led the C.M.S. in London to invite Crowther to England for pre-ordination studies. He arrived on 3rd September 1842, some fifteen years after his first visit. His period of study was brief, but he impressed his tutors.

On 2 December 1843 Crowther returned to Freetown in Sierra Leone. His welcome was encouraging. White and black joined in congratulating him and in expressing support for his work. And it was not only Christians who were well-disposed. The welcome came from Christians, Muslims and adherents of African traditional religion.[1.] On Sunday 3 December he preached his first sermon to a mixed congregation of Africans and Europeans, on a text from the Gospel of St. Luke, 'Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room'.[2.] It was at this time that he began to translate some chapters of the same Gospel into the Yoruba vernacular. His appointment was not to a parish, but to a tutorship at Fourah Bay College. Within a few months he was Acting Principal, the first African to have administrative responsibility for the work of the College. This appointment was not to last long. His real preparation was for the mission to Yorubaland, under the auspices of C.M.S. Crowther's new status, as one who had penetrated the preserves of white Europeans, was the subject

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1. C.M.S. CA1/079, Crowther to C.M.S., dated 12 December 1843.
2. St. Luke, xiv, 22.

of comment and even adulation.[1.]

Within a fortnight of his return to Freetown Crowther came into contact with a Yoruba Muslim, a headman of a village near to the College. Crowther took the opportunity of presenting to him the message of the Christian Gospel. He drew attention to its influence on the British people - a people who had supported the Niger expedition of 1841 - and who, in spite of previous failure, were now preparing to send another expedition, to Yorubaland, with Crowther himself playing an important rôle. Crowther made no attempt to belittle the claims of Islam. He seems to have expected criticism from this Muslim, a fellow Yoruba, for planning a return to his own people to evangelize them. This was not the case. Both the Imam and Crowther were far from home. Crowther's notable success, achieved despite great personal suffering and the apparent hopelessness of his position may have commended him to a fellow - countryman. Theological differences were subordinated to ethnic ties.[2.] The encounter between the two men was courteous. With three exceptions, the Muslims did not attend the Christian service - conducted in the Yoruba language, in 1844 - to which Crowther invited them.

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1. Crowther had achieved his present position on merit. He had to convince his European mentors and tutors that their stereotype of the African was defective. Schofield, the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, was obliged to recognise the merit of Crowther's answers, 'I should like to take young Crowther's answers to those Paley questions back with me to Cambridge, and there read a few of them in the Combination Room to certain of my Trinity friends. If, after hearing that young African's answers they still contend that he does not possess a logical faculty, they will tempt us to question whether they do not lack certain other faculties of at least equal importance, such as common fairness of judgement and Christian candour'. TBB, page 71.

2. cf. G.O. Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba 1841-1908, (Ph.D. thesis) University of Ibadan 1968, page 252. Now published by Longman, 1978.

Crowther recorded this incident in some detail.[1.]

On 9 January 1844 Crowther began a service in the C.M.S. church in Freetown. He conducted it in Yoruba, with parts translated into English. There was considerable interest. Numbers of Yorubas as well as Efiks and Ibos began to take steps to become Christian. The Christian Gospel had been preached in Freetown for many years, but the advent of a black priest who conducted the services and preached in the vernacular gave a new impetus to Christianity in the Colony. Crowther found time to visit the homes of Muslims, and of adherents of traditional religion. He was moved by the sight of so many of his fellow-countrymen languishing - as he saw it - in the grip of Islam and paganism. He attempted to inject new life into Christian mission.

Crowther's birthplace, Oshogun, had been devastated by the Yoruba Muslims who attacked it, seizing Crowther and many others, in their pursuit of slaves. The community had ceased to exist. The king fled into exile, local chiefs

> 'threw off their allegiance to the sovereign now humiliated and each fighting for self-preservation, not only retained his own identity but even became independent of the king'.[2.]

The survivors of the Oshogun community fled into the bush to escape the further attention of the slave-raiders. Their refuge was a hill, at a place marked by a pile of stones, near

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1. CMS CA1/079, Crowther to CMS, 18 December 1843; TBB, pp. 76ff.

2. E.M.T. Epelle, op.cit. page 24; TBB, pp. 81-84.

the river Ogun. The site offered some possibility of defence. It had served as a remote refuge for hunted robbers. This rock fortress, known as Olumo, was the rallying point for the survivors. This community began to grow, attracting others to its refuge.

> 'They established themselves there, and were later on joined by their fellow countrymen and by refugees of other tribes and clans - each tribe with its own war captain, judge and code of laws, in many cases naming their own small community after their former town destroyed... (the place was called) 'Abeokuta' meaning 'under the rock'.[1]. The town was founded in 1830 (nine years after the capture of Crowther) by a great leader - Shodeke - the centenary was celebrated in 1930 during the reign of Adenola II. The town of Oshogun is non-existent now and the site itself is unidentifiable'.[2].

This new settlement grew in size and importance. Its newly-found unity stiffened its capacity to withstand attacks from enemies. News about the Colony of liberated slaves to the west in Sierra Leone began to filter through to the people of Abeokuta. The possibility that relatives, feared dead or transported, were still alive, brought the people of this Yoruba-land community into a special relationship with Freetown. For their part the liberated slaves - who by this time had sampled something of the benefits of a more sophisticated economy - were keen to return to their homeland. The return was to include a Christian missionary element. Chief among the Christians who went back was Crowther, who, for readily understandable reasons, was reluctant to encourage a general repatriation on the grounds that a substantial return of 'pagans' would restrict and hamper the evangelisation of the people.

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1. i.e. Olumo.

2. Epelle, op.cit. page 24.

The return of the Egba people to their homeland was unsystematic and voluntary. It was neither supported nor impeded by the colonial power. Many newly influential liberated citizens chose to remain in Sierra Leone. This meant that the return of individuals and small groups was often perilous and hazardous. Badagry and Lagos (at the mouth of the Ogun river) became successive stepping-stones to Abeokuta. Trade was established, and in the wake of trade, came missionaries with their stories about the Gospel of Christ. Africans began to experience the European's power to liberate, pacify and educate. Badagry was more hospitable to returning Egbas than Lagos where the dominant Popos failed to succour the returning Egbas during the last push from the coast to Abeokuta.[1.]

Would those who returned lapse from Christianity to paganism? Would returning pagans re-invigorate belief in the gods who had failed to deliver the people from the deprivations of the Muslim slave-raiders? These were questions which European missionaries, and Crowther, were exercised to answer. The Church Missionary Society despatched Henry Townsend to Abeokuta to find out what the prospects for the work of Christian mission were. With a group of colleagues from Sierra Leone he proceeded uneventfully, in spite of the difficulties of climate and terrain, preaching the Gospel as he went. At one meeting en route to Abeokuta Townsend noted an exchange which he was happy to record subsequently as evidence that Africans were ready for the Gospel and prepared to accept white missionaries.[2.]

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1. TBB, pp. 83-84; Epelle op.cit. page 24.

2. TBB, page 85.

The C.M.S., had sent Henry Townsend to Abeokuta in 1843.[1] The Chief of Abeokuta, Shodeke, met him, patronised him and supported his work in several ways, not least by permitting him to preach the Gospel to the people directly, and by assuring him that further missionaries would be welcome. Townsend completed his preliminary survey and returned to England in 1843, where he was ordained. Ordination was the last step in his own preparation for missionary work among the Yoruba. He returned to Abeokuta, calling at Freetown to gather a party of missionaries who were to accompany him. Crowther was a member of the party.[2] On 18 December 1844 the party left Freetown for Abeokuta. They arrived at Badagry on 17 January 1845. News reached them there that Chief Shodeke had died. They were concerned to know if the Chief's successor would be as favourably disposed to their mission as he, but they were not able to proceed immediately to find out. The reason for this delay was that protracted hostilities between Dahomey and the Egba had isolated Abeokuta. For some eighteen months the party had to wait in Badagry until they were able to make the last part of their journey to Abeokuta, arriving in November 1846. The missionaries travelled the seventy five miles from Badagry in four days, making their way through tropical rain-forest and over poor roads. For Crowther this was a joyous homecoming.

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1. Where he met the remarkable Wesleyan Methodist Missionary, the Rev. T.B. Freeman. Freeman, half Negro, half English, arrived in Abeokuta in December 1842 - about a month before Townsend. Shodeke invited him to settle and to send for more missionaries and traders. cf. F.D. Walker, The Romance of the Black River, London, 1931, page 42.

2. Besides Townsend and Crowther, the party consisted of two Europeans, the Rev. C.A. Gollmer and his wife, Mrs. Crowther and two small children, a catechist called Marsh (also with a wife and two children), Mark Willoughby, an interpreter (with his wife and three children) and a schoolteacher called Phillips. The party was completed by four carpenters, three labourers and two African servants.

The enforced eighteen month delay in Badagry afforded time for further preparation, and for the growing conviction that their missionary work was going to be far from easy. The native people were backward and superstitious. Many had been demoralized by addiction to the alcoholic spirits which they received as payment for the slaves they delivered. Human sacrifice was not unknown. After three months one of Crowther's European missionary colleagues died.[1.]

During this period Crowther pursued his study of the Yoruba language. He had time to continue his translation of the Scriptures into Yoruba and to prepare a vernacular liturgy to enable people to participate in worship. It was a period during which he had a succession of meetings with representatives of traditional religion and with Muslims.

The months spent at Badagry also provided him with time to study the cohesion of traditional society. Life was presented as a whole. Society was integrated by its common beliefs. The pattern which emerged was a complex interweaving of religious beliefs, justice, social privileges, constraints, tabus, and medical praxis. It was no light matter to challenge the religious basis of such society. Crowther knew better than many who followed him how disruptive the existence of Christian mission might be in a traditional African society. For this reason he exercised himself to understand that kind of society and to find ways in which the essential Christian message (as opposed to its non-African cultural accretion) could best be expressed for African peoples.

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1. This was Mrs. Gollmer, wife of the Rev. C.A. Gollmer. See supra, page 66 , footnote 2 .

This was a most difficult and disturbed time for Yorubaland. The people were gripped by a series of disputes and civil wars. There were invasions from the Dahomeyan forces from the south-west and the Fulanis in the north-east. The British and French were showing more interest in acquiring control of the area, largely through the use of sea power.[1] The range of their ship-mounted guns was strictly limited so that further inland the Yorubas were left to themselves. The social and civil disorder was sufficient to provide European adventurers, administrators and missionaries, with reasons for penetrating the interior.

> 'The substitution of a civilised authority for the accursed despotism of Pagan and Mohammedan powers is a divine and gracious interposition'.[2]

Both Freeman and Townsend had discovered that the Egbas encouraged their presence. This was not entirely in response to missionary aspirations. Through them the Yorubas had access to the British government to whom Shodeke appealed for military support against his enemies.[3] From the point of view of the

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1. The British captured a base at Lagos in 1851 after a decisive bombardment. Crowther's group of missionaries arrived in Badagry and Abeokuta in 1842 and 1846 respectively. The people of these three towns were divided by the arrival of Crowther and his colleagues, into pro- and anti-missionary factions. cf. E.A. Ayandele, MIMN pp. 9ff; S.O. Biobaku The Egba State and its Neighbours 1842-1972 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London) 1951, pp. 94-188; J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Mission and the Making of Modern Nigeria 1841-1891 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London) 1958, pp. 138-188. Also J.F. Herskovits, Liberated Africans and the History of Lagos Colony to 1886 (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford) 1960, pp. 96-162).

2. J.T.F. Halligrey, "The Yoruba Country, Abeokuta and Lagos", in Work and Workers, London, 1899, page 389.

3. In 1844 Shodeke had asked for military support against the town of Ado, half way between Badagry and Abeokuta. He also appealed for missionaries and traders, claiming that his people were trying to combat the slave trade. cf. J.F. Herskovits op.cit. page 104.

British government an interesting situation was now developing. Yorubas who had been taken from Yorubaland into slavery, shipped on the transatlantic passage, liberated by British naval units and re-settled as free citizens in the colony of Sierra Leone, were now divided into those who wanted to remain as freemen in the Colony and those who were prepared to risk return to their homeland.[1.] It was not easy to see why those who had been liberated should wish to return to a country in which a fate similar to that which they had already suffered awaited them. It was also a matter of conjecture to decide on the measure of British protection (if any) to be appropriately afforded to those who did return. The British government had no desire to be dragged into the internal politics of Yorubaland. The British could not prevent this return, but chose to leave ambiguous the legal status of the Yorubas concerned. The difficulty was that these liberated slaves were followed back to Badagry, Lagos and Abeokuta by British missionaries and traders, about whose civil status as British subjects there could be no doubt. They did require some form of protection. Uncertainty about the reception they would have at the hand of local chiefs gave substance to the appeals for protection which the early missionaries made to British government officials.[2.] Crowther himself claimed the support of British power, asking that missionaries and educated Africans should be

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1. The liberated Yorubas were known as Akus.

2. United Presbyterian Church of Scotland Minutes of 8 and 24 December 1843, in which Hope Waddell postponed his departure for mission work in Old Calabar until the government had agreed to provide his party with a guarantee of protection.

followed wherever they went "with anxious eye".[1.] When in the 1840's, British, French and American missionaries began to move inland they were confronted with a situation in which their presence (for reasons which they could not wholly approve) was welcomed by some, and resented by others.[2.] They had to wait on the local ruler to ask for permission to begin work. If approval was given they were given, or leased, a parcel of land, and watched for a period.[3.]

When Crowther and his colleagues arrived in Abeokuta on 3 August 1846[4.] he was greeted by Sagbua, the paramount chief, and by his councillors who provided 20,000 cowrie shells and a sheep for his maintenance. Crowther replied in Yoruba to this unusually generous welcome. The work of building the mission soon commenced.[5.] Crowther was soon greeted by members of his own family from whom he had been separated. He described the

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1. J.F. Herskovits, op.cit. page 106. Educated Africans (Saros) had been settling in Abeokuta since 1839 and helping Shodeke to press for British support there.

2. Townsend's brief stay among the Egba led him to over-estimate the receptiveness of the people of Abeokuta for mission per se. He and other Europeans were welcomed for more pragmatic reasons. Two factors seem important. First that the Egba were not interested in Christian missionaries as messengers of a new religion of which they stood in need, although they were curious about it. Second they actively opposed conversion of their own people to Christianity because it disrupted the pattern of traditional beliefs and social order. They did not appear to object that the Saros (and their dependents) embraced Christianity. The Saros were regarded as white men in any case. But when it came to a clash between the requirements of Christian practice and the customs of the people, it was the former which had to give way to the latter. The punishment of apostates was thorough. cf. S.O. Biobaku op.cit. page 124.

3. N.Q. King, Christian and Muslim in Africa, Harper & Row, New York, 1971, page 48; E.A. Ayandele MIMN, pp. 4-12.

4. The journey to Abeokuta was full of incident. The route was a difficult one, made more so by torrential rain. Crowther records the details in a letter dated 12 November, to another missionary in Sierra Leone. See TBB, page 93.

5. TBB, page 95.

re-union with his mother which took place on 21 August 1846.[1.]

The brother referred to here was in possession of several Muslim as well as traditional charms and amulets. A traditional priest had informed him that his brother (i.e. Crowther) was to return from "beyond the waters" to tell him "what to do, for he is a worshipper of the true God".[2.] Crowther's mother became his first convert to Christianity in Abeokuta. On 5 February 1848 she was baptised by her son, taking the name of Hannah, the mother of the Biblical Samuel.[3.]

Together with Gollmer, Crowther began to build up the mission in Abeokuta. They began to preach informally in the open-air and in the town markets. Several of the christianised liberated slaves from Sierra Leone reverted to the practice of traditional religion under local family pressure. The case of Lucie Taylor provided one notable example of Christian steadfastness. She was desperately ill but refused to have recourse to the Yoruba deities of Shango, Osun and Obatala, even though those close to her brought sacred emblems to the bedside.[4.]

The close connection between Yoruba life and religion tended to

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1. ibid, pp. 95-96.
2. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 September 1846, entry for 26 August 1846.
3. cf. I Samuel i, 20.
4. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 September 1846, entry for 24 September.

isolate the Christian from the community. Crowther wrote,

> '..people in this country are harassed within and without, by unjust war and kidnapping, as well as by the superstitious belief in the power and influence of false gods, and the craftiness of the priests'.[1].

In spite of all the difficulties, the young church in Abeokuta continued to grow. In a letter dated 3 August 1849 Crowther wrote,

> 'This mission is today three years old. What has God wrought in that short period! We have 500 constant attendants on the means of grace, 80 Communicants, and 200 candidates for baptism'.[2].

These figures are an impressive testimony to Crowther's diligence, but the student needs to be cautious in interpreting them. In the eulogistic and uncritical accounts of work in the mission field which were based largely on the missionaries' own reports there is a tendency to exaggerate the importance of evangelistic success. The difficulties are described, often in great detail, but the impression is given that nothing can finally deflect the progress of Christianity; the mission field is the place for heroic activity, for devotion and sacrifice, and for the difficult and often dangerous sowing of the seed. But it is also the place where God is acting in power, the place where the victory is being won. One of the reasons why the missionaries often failed to convey an adequate impression of the intransigence of the people among whom they worked was that they did not know African society well enough

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1. ibid, page 21.
2. TBB, page 97.

to analyse the real problems. Because of this they were unable to deal with the fundamental criticisms of Christianity which the people had. Figures of "converts", of attendance at church and school, whether inflated or real, tended to conceal the impregnability of the citadels of African society.

> 'Christian missionaries, fired by the idealism of a faith to which they ascribed, rightly or wrongly, the enlightenment, progress and technological achievements of their countries, perceived no wisdom in compromising with indigenous customs and institutions: the new wine of European Christianity had to be put into new bottles'.[1.]

In July of 1847 Crowther was once more in Badagry. His Journal entry for the 11th records questions about the feeble efforts of missionaries to make greater inroads into pagan superstition.[2.] In Badagry he obtained a supply of Arabic bibles to take back to Abeokuta, where - to each of the Muslim leaders in the town - he gave a copy, and even took lessons in Hausa to be able to converse with them more readily.[3.] But Islam was not the real opponent in the struggle. Crowther's targets at this time were Yoruba beliefs. The society based on these beliefs came under attack, and because - in Crowther's case - the attack came through the medium of the Yoruba tongue, it was potentially

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1. E.A. Ayandele MIMN, page 4.

2. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 September 1847; cf. E. Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Longman, 1962, pp. 91ff.

3. CMS, CA2/031, entry of 2 August 1847.

more subversive. By the middle of November Crowther's preaching had been sufficiently effective to make the people less certain than before about the power of Oro.[1]

The year 1848 was a very difficult one for the small Christian community in Abeokuta, and a distressing one for Crowther. The doubts about traditional observances which his preaching had sown were seized upon by the Yoruba priests as evidence that Christianity was a threat to their society. The question for the Christians to answer was whether or not they could - as Christians - participate in the traditional rites. To attend without participating fully would arouse hostility. To stay away would lead to isolation and to a ghetto status for the church. There was, of course, a further possibility which Crowther also foresaw, namely, that if the witness of the few Christians was sufficiently resolute, their example might be followed by many others, thus striking at the heart of Yoruba society.[2]

As on former occasions the climax came over the Oro festival. Oro is one of the principal deities in Yoruba religion, from whose cult women were excluded. Men became members by

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1. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 December 1847, page 3; Mackenzie, IREM, pp. 23-24.

2. CMS, CA2/031, letter to Henry Venn, pp. 3ff.

initiation.[1.]

> 'the distinctive characteristic of Oro is his 'voice' which is the 'bull roarer', and the fact that, by and large, he operates only in the grove and is abroad only at night. There are only a few localities where he materialises in a masked figure: in those places women are shut in when Oro is abroad'.[2.]

During the four nights of the Oro festival the attempt was made to win back the allegiance of those who had defected to the ranks of the Christians and those who had not gone so far but who had become sceptical about the efficacy of the gods. The demonstration was not very successful. At its close the Christians went to church. The traditionalists tried further attacks on individuals. Christians were publicly humiliated in the stocks, their Bibles and other books burned.[3.] Some came through this fire of persecution. Others could not withstand it, and lapsed.[4.] In all this Crowther attempted to mediate, counselling prudence and suggesting that the putting away of idols by Christians did not necessarily require their public contempt of the cult. Yet his own decision to raise the church on a site sacred to a Yoruba deity was not calculated to increase understanding.

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1. For a description of the cults of Oro and Egungun, See E. Bolaji Idowu, Oludumare: God in Yoruba Belief. Longman, 1966, pp. 127, 152, 192-194; cf. S.O. Biobaku, "Egba Traditional Authorities" in Africa, vol. 22, 1952, page 39.

2. Idowu, ibid, page 193. Both Oro and Egungun were held to be the agents of discipline in the social order, with powers of life and death over the individual. It is not surprising that the traditionalists saw that claims on behalf of another faith had to be met in what amounted to a test case.

3. IREM, pp. 26-31.

4. CMS, CA2/031 Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 December 1848, pp. 4-9.

The year 1848 was also a year in which the first Christian convert died. The mission wanted to bury him according to Christian rites, but some of his relatives seized the opportunity to insist on the primacy of their indigenous funeral rites. This was a critical time for the mission, when individual Christians began to be persecuted.[1.] This opposition persisted for the next two years and Crowther was confronted with a number of problems. First he had to support and encourage the members of the church to stand firm. He had to defend them against gratuitous attacks. He had to watch as some Christians lapsed after finding the pressure on them too great to withstand.[2.]

Two quite different factors emerged during this period which influenced the situation and helped to deflect the anger of the majority from the young church. The first was the appearance of an agent of the British trading company, Thomas Hutton and Co. Within a few months of his arrival a trading store was established in Abeokuta. Another was set up in Badagry a few months later. This was the beginning of an exercise in commercial development which was to revolutionize the economies

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1. Men and women were publicly whipped and shackled. Their houses were burnt. Christians were accused of denigrating the gods and traditional culture, of revealing the secrets of Oro and Egungun to women, and of undermining the social order by rejecting its religious foundations. Some were given the chance to recant in public. When they refused, their heads were shaved. The traditional priests wanted to cleanse the town from an unwanted, alien, Christian influence. They planned an Ifole (house-cleaning). Such a 'cleansing' had already happened several times against the Muslim minority. See CMS, CA2/031 Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 December 1849, pp. 1-7; ibid, letter Crowther to Henry Venn, dated 3 November 1849.

2. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract Quarter ending 25 June 1850, page 3; cf. ibid, Quarter ending 25 December 1853, page 5.

of West African countries. It marked the beginning of organised legitimate commerce in areas hitherto associated with slave-trading. It was a development which depended heavily on European capital, European business acumen, and European management.[1.] The arrival of this highly competitive element in society tended to deflect critical activity into other channels. Crowther had an opportunity to see the seeds of another conflict sown, that between the love of money and the love of God.

The second factor was the invasion of Egba territory by Dahomeyans, led by Gezo.[2.] In March 1851 the invaders from Dahomey came. Gezo struck with a force of some 14,000 men and women, choosing to attack the Aro gate, a point which he had been led to believe (by what he thought to be enemies of the Egba) was vulnerable. In fact it was stoutly defended. The Egba repulsed the attack, defeating Gezo and taking the lives of 3,000

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1. The development of legitimate commerce in West Africa is a fascinating story, often associated with the names of little-known entrepreneurs whose flair for commerce helped them to build large concerns, with branches in many parts of West Africa. Their contribution to the development of the economies of these territories was great. The beginnings were small, but the companies soon began to develop the trade in cash crops - palm produce (oil and nuts), cocoa, groundnuts, cotton, rubber. This in turn developed into the provision of consumer durables, of technical services, of insurance, shipping and aviation, and the encouragement of local industry. An example of what was achieved is provided in Merchant Adventure, the brief record of one company's activities, that of John Holt & Co., (Liverpool) Ltd., published by the company in 1955. For further references to Holt's career, see footnote 1, page 40, supra.

2. Gezo occupied the throne of Dahomey in 1818, and fought successfully to free his people from Oyo dominance. His interest did not stop there. In particular he looked for expansion to Yoruba-land.

of his troops.[1.] The removal of the Dahomeyan menace was a time for great rejoicing, and Crowther's stock rose. Crowther lost no time in attributing the deliverance to the Lord.

> 'that an army of about 16,000 (sic) should be beaten off in so short a time (is) the work of that God whom ... the white man serves'.[2.]

The Christians identified themselves with the people of Abeokuta in defence of their city, and when the attack was repulsed there seemed to be less reason than before to intimidate and persecute the Christians.[3.]

A little later in the year, on 13 August 1851, Crowther and his wife landed in England. It was his third visit. Before sailing he presented the paramount chief Sagbua with two Bibles (one in English, the other in Arabic), the gift of Queen Victoria. He also handed over a steel cornmill, the gift of Prince Albert.[4.] During his stay in England Crowther met the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, whom he briefed on the political situation in

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1. This was Gezo's last military adventure in Yorubaland. He died in 1858. As early as 1800 the Dahomeyan army was noted for its organization and ferocity. Both men and women were included in the army. The fighting élite were the elephant huntresses. Dahomey lived by slave-trading.

2. Journal entry, CMS, CA2/031, Quarter ending 25 March 1854, page 15. It is to be noted that as soon as Gezo had been defeated, the Egbas pressed for the removal of the anti-missionary Kosoko of Lagos. The same year (1851) saw the bombardment of Lagos by the British and marked the beginning of British involvement in the colonial domination of the territory which was to become Nigeria.

3. Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, Faber & Faber, 1973, pp. 144-145.

4. The Queen also sent a letter (translated by Crowther) commending the Gospel to the people. The text of the letter is in TBB, page 101.

West Africa. Later Lord Russell presented him to the Queen and Prince Albert. Hearing of his work on the translation of the Bible into Yoruba, the Queen asked him to repeat the Lord's Prayer "in the Yoruba". This Crowther did, and the Queen appears to have enjoyed a tongue she did not know, for its "soft and melodious language".[1] On this visit Crowther also met the sea captain (Leeke) who had rescued him and taken him aboard H.M.S. Myrmidon twenty nine years before. He visited the University of Cambridge and appealed to students there to come out to West Africa to join him in the work of Christian mission.[2] On 5 December 1851 the Earl of Chichester, President of the Church Missionary Society, chaired a farewell meeting for Crowther and his wife in Islington. Henry Venn, clerical secretary of the society, congratulated Crowther on what had already been achieved in the eight years of mission in Yoruba-land. He noted Crowther's tactful handling of the local chiefs, and urged caution in the approach to Muslims, to slave-traders and the native priests. Venn went on to sketch in broad terms the future task of the mission, pointing out that on the Niger the missionaries

> 'would have not only to spread Christianity, but fix its character, organize a native Church, create a Christian literature, and lay plans for days to come'.[3]

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1. ibid, page 106; See Eugene Stock HCMS, vol. 2, page 113.

2. 'St. Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia, who prayed him to come over to his assistance. But it is no vision that you see now; it is a real man of Africa that stands before you, and on behalf of his countrymen invites you to come over into Africa and help us'. TBB, page 106.

3. TBB, pp. 107-108.

Turning to Mrs. Crowther, Venn went on,

> 'May she return with a double blessing to her countrywomen'. May she indeed be a mother to that spiritual Israel in the wilderness of Africa'. And may the native Church, once confined to the house of Samuel Crowther, become a national Church, but still retaining its character as an aggregation of Christian households, bound together by one common tie of love and union with Christ, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed'.[1].

Crowther's reply to this expression of support provides the student of his approach to the task of mission with evidence of his shrewdness. He recalled the difficulties encountered by those who attempted to penetrate the fortresses of a region dominated by heathen superstition and the slave-trade. He reminded his audience of the importance of the vernacular in the work of evangelisation, mentioning his own translation work and the liturgical experiments which accompanied it. He spoke of the eagerness with which his people looked for the development of trade and commerce, and of what he clearly saw as the essential link between the spread of Christianity and the social, economic and political development of his people.[2].

After the visit to London Crowther returned to Sierra Leone, spending some time there before completing his journey to

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1. ibid, page 108. The conversion of Mrs. Crowther to Christianity was an encouragement to those who wanted to see the work extended among Muslims.

   'My wife's mother was a Mohammedan, but she was early delivered from the poisonous doctrine of that great imposition, which makes man dependent upon his own merits for salvation'. (EHM, page 7).

2. The political influence of the C.M.S., was confirmed by the events of 1851. In pursuance of their policy of "Bible and Plough" they lobbied the British government, and played an active part in local politics; See TBB, pp. 109-110.

Abeokuta.[1.] On 14 June 1852 he arrived in Lagos and then went back to the mission where he was given a warm welcome. He busied himself in translating the early books of the New Testament into the vernacular.[2.] In the same year (1852) Crowther's son started a dispensary as part of the mission's activity. Among those who attended for treatment were some who had attacked the Christians previously. Crowther's approach to non-Christians lost nothing of its apologetic edge, but the polemic was less marked at this stage in his dealings with traditional religion. From an Ifa priest he heard,

> 'Softly you must go with us, or you will spoil the whole matter; stretch the bow too much and it will break. Remember how deeply we are rooted in heathenism. We cannot get out of it all at once'.[3.]

In 1853 the C.M.S. decided to expand mission work outside Yorubaland.[4.] David Hinderer and his wife (who was to become a missionary in her own right) intended to work among Muslims in the North, but were prevented from going to Hausaland by the civil strife there. Instead, they established a station at Ibadan. Their travels in the area were extensive and, except in Ijebuland,

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1. He used his time in Sierra Leone to tell Christians of the progress of the mission in Yorubaland.

2. With the help of Bishop Vidal he compiled a Yoruba/English dictionary. Crowther claimed that many Yoruba laws and customs were in harmony with those of ancient Israel, and that there were similarities between Yoruba and Hebrew words.

3. TBB, page 113.

4. By this time the Methodists had arrived in Abeokuta, under the leadership of T.B. Freeman.

local reception was promising.[1] The year 1853 was also an important year for Crowther. He received an invitation to take part in another expedition to the Niger. The idea was to explore the Niger and Benue territories, journeying up this extensive river system under the leadership of Dr. Baikie.[2] The expedition was not primarily a missionary venture, but with Crowther aboard there was every hope that he would look for places where mission stations could be established. Crowther kept an admirably detailed journal.[3]

Crowther left Lagos in June to join the expedition at Fernando Po. Once again it was the challenge of potential commercial opportunities which provided the spur, but Crowther's task was clear. Macgregor Laird, already well known for his entrepreneurial activity in West Africa, proposed to send a single vessel, The Pleiad, to explore the river system as far as possible. The plan was to travel up the river Nun and the Niger, and then east at the confluence up the river Tshadda.[4] Dr. Baikie's task was

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1. See Anna Hinderer, Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country, London, 1873.

2. After the debacle of 1841, the British Government was reluctant to support further ventures on the Niger, but the enthusiastic reports of Heinrich Barth helped to change its opinion. See his Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa (5 vols.) London, 1857; A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, Barth's Travels in Northern Nigeria, London, 1962.

3. S.A. Crowther, Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and the Tshadda Rivers undertaken by Macgregor Laird, Esq., in connection with the British Government, in 1854, London, 1855. The second edition of this work, with a new Introduction by J.F.A. Ajayi was published in London by Frank Cass in 1970. See also K. Onwuka Dike, Origins of the Niger Mission - 1841-1891, Lagos, 1957.

4. The former name of the Benue, referring (as was supposed) to the river leading to Chad.

to make new notes on the geography of the region. Laird offered the C.M.S. a free passage for Crowther. Lieutenant Glover, later a Governor of Lagos, was second in command.[1.]

Unlike the expedition of 1841 this one was a success and gave the impetus to the founding of the Niger Mission a few years later. No lives were lost on this occasion. Crowther expressed regret that so much time had been lost in establishing missionary work on the Niger since the first ill-fated expedition.[2.] Baikie, who studied medicine at Edinburgh, ensured that his crew enjoyed the benefit of the prophylactic qualities of quinine. The safe return of the expedition immediately aroused the interest of British entrepreneurs, who saw the prospect of almost limitless commercial development, now that the interior was open to black and white, provided that adequate steps were taken to safeguard health. This renewal of interest in West Africa provided opportunities for the missionaries. The explorers had demonstrated that the country could be opened up. The British Government, which had helped to finance the expedition of 1854, was not slow to respond to the administrative challenge. But this was the beginning of a period of intensive commercial development, the period of the European trader.[3.] Trade, commerce, Christianity and philanthropy went hand in hand, though not always amicably.

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1. W.B. Baikie, Narrative on an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue commonly known as the Niger and Tshadda - in 1854, London, 1856; Michael Crowder "Pioneer of the Niger - W.B. Baikie", in West African Review, XXVI, 339, December 1955, pp. 1157-61.

2. TBB, pp. 118-141.

3. As the slave-trade declined, the trade in palm products increased. Macgregor Laird established a steam-packet service between Liverpool and Lagos. He also pioneered a regular boat service from Fernando Po off the Niger, as far as Lokoja, at the confluence with the Benue.

During the expedition Crowther diligently made contact with the native authorities of the towns along the Niger, beginning the work of evangelisation. He landed at Aboh on 22 July 1854 and spoke to Chukuma about establishing Christianity in his territory. The king accepted the Gospel, and permitted Simon Jonas, a catechist, to remain behind to teach the faith, and to prepare a site for the mission. But as the expedition pushed further north they came up against the barrier of Islam. On 19 August Crowther visited Idoma where he noted the predominance of pagan fetishes.[1.] Among the Jukun he encountered a group of people still ruled by their traditional leaders, who, in their turn, were subordinated to Muslim mallams.[2.]

Crowther made detailed notes in his Journal of encounters he had with the people of this area. It struck Crowther as an area which was ripe for the Gospel. Physically as well as spiritually the people were depressed. That the Christian faith had something to give them he had no doubt. He was equally clear about the way in which mission should be conducted. For Crowther, from the beginning, the best way forward was to use African catechists. They may have lacked the wider knowledge of their European colleagues, but they could understand their own people in ways closed to white missionaries. Another principle of Crowther's missionary strategy was made explicit at this point. For the African, conversion to Christianity was a gradual

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1. cf. R.G. Armstrong, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Idoma Concept of God", African Notes, Institute of African Studies, Ibadan, vol. 4, no. 1, 1966, pp. 11-17.

2. TBB, page 133.

process of development and growth. Sudden results were not to be looked for. In this, Crowther was undoubtedly right, although few of his European colleagues seemed to grasp the significance of his analysis.[1.] The knowledge of what would be required to establish missionary work on the Niger was enough to blunt the edge of his earlier polemic against both traditional religion and Islam. On this expedition he was collecting information.

> 'My chief object in wishing to spend some time on shore among the people was to ascertain their religious rites and by quiet conversation to collect as much information from them as I could'.[2.]

The return of the expedition was required by the rapid seasonal fall in the level of the water. The Pleiad travelled downstream, crossing the bar on the 6 November 1854 when Crowther gave thanks to God for a safe journey.[3.]

The expedition marked a turning point, and Crowther was not slow to learn lessons from it. The major lessons can be simply rehearsed. No lives were lost. This suggested that with care and the use of appropriate medicine both blacks and whites could work efficiently in an area hitherto designated as too dangerous. The enthusiastic welcome given to himself and to other Africans on

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1. The Secretary of the C.M.S., Henry Venn, had already made up his mind that the Africanization of the mission had to be begun. The prophylactic qualities of quinine removed one of the reasons for his concern - namely - that Africans would have to be responsible for the work because Europeans could not survive the diseases. But later he came to agree with Crowther, and to support him against unfavourable criticism and opposition, that Africanization was inherently right, if the Gospel was ever to take root.

2. S.A. Crowther, Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers, London, 1855, page 99. Back at Aboh in November he reflected on the religion associated with the Aro shrine, ibid, pp. 192-193.

3. TBB, page 139.

board Pleiad by the peoples along the Niger suggested that the time for more systematic mission work was now. With adequate preparation and training, Africans could go back to their own people to commend the Gospel.[1.]

The commercial implications of this successful opening up of the river system were wide-ranging. If the region was ready for the Gospel it was also ripe for trade. Crowther himself recognized the importance of this, and took a personal interest in the development of cotton-growing as a cash crop. His diligence and skill earned him a gracious tribute from Baikie.[2.]

Crowther at once began to plan on the basis of his reconnaissance. Sites such as Onitsha and Lokoja were already in his mind for future development. In seeking to establish the mission, Crowther was planning a radical change in the lives of the people. White missionaries might feel obliged to change the pattern of African life. They wanted the people for Christ. The relative backwardness of the African peoples with whom they came into contact led them to assume that even as European technology and industrialization was more significant than anything Africa could offer, so too was the religion which they brought.

The British expedition to the Niger in 1857 was the occasion for the setting up of the C.M.S. Niger Mission. Crowther was the dominant partner in this enterprise, planning against the day when the mission would begin, superintending its early activities and progress, and finally becoming its bishop.

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1. ibid, page 140.

2. ibid, pp. 140-141.

Memories of the successful expedition of 1854 were still fresh. From the British point of view another expedition designed to explore and exploit the natural resources of the Niger area, was timely. The Crimean War had occupied attention from 1854-1856, but with its end came a fresh stimulus to engage in trade and commerce, if only to seek some kind of compensation for losses suffered in the war. The trade in palm-produce began to flourish. It was lucrative, and it led to the appearance of several European trading companies. Once again the British government financed the expedition. Macgregor Laird was asked to lead it. As on the previous occasion, Laird offered a free passage for Crowther.

The expedition left Fernando Po for the Niger Delta on 29 June 1857. Crowther had given some thought to the selection of those with whom the work of mission would go forward. Bishop Weeks of Sierra Leone arranged for some African teachers to be sent up the Niger.[1.] When still in Lagos Crowther had decided to enlist the support of a fellow Yoruba from Sierra Leone, who was a Muslim skilled in Arabic.

The expedition steamed up the Niger on board the Dayspring. Baikie was again present. Crowther had much to pre-occupy him. The first task for him was to establish a native Church. This would require African clergy who would have to be selected,

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1. In this matter Crowther and Weeks were agreed, but there were more fundamental differences between them - notably, on the question of giving baptism to the owners of slaves, and to women in polygamous marriages. Crowther remained consistent, allowing for the deep and continuing influence of traditional customs, and arguing that (for instance) the women concerned, could not be denied baptism, because they were victims of a social system. It was a system they had no power to change. See J.F.A. Ajayi, CMN, pp. 103-108.

prepared and equipped to minister to their own people. His own experiences in Abeokuta had already convinced him of this need. At the same time he feared the element of over-lapping, by which missionaries from different societies and denominations appeared to compete for African converts. How was this to be avoided? His solution was to recommend that each missionary society should have a particular sphere of influence.[1.]

The Dayspring steamed up the Niger, passing through Brass country and visiting Aboh. After a fortnight the expedition arrived at Onitsha, a town which had been selected for the first Niger Mission station. On 27 July 1857 Crowther's party disembarked at Onitsha. The local people were afraid at first, but the Obi (king) soon granted a plot of land on which the missionaries undertook to build. Onitsha was intended to be the headquarters of a purely native mission, under the direct control of Africans. The Yoruba mission was still controlled by Europeans. The Niger Mission was intended to be different, but it did not turn out that way, for reasons which Crowther may not have foreseen. In 1857 his hopes were expressed in this way,

> 'A mission planted from a native ministry and an entire native offshoot from the colony of Sierra Leone, is a step in advance of the Yoruba mission, commenced and worked under the direction of European missionaries'.[2.]

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1. TBB, page 151. From the beginning Crowther envisaged one Church. This was what Africa needed. Two decades after this Blyden supported this view. 'The intellectual and spiritual growth of the people must be checked or distorted by the introduction of the bitterness of theological rancour and the harshness of conflicting sects', (quoted in E.M.T. Epelle, Bishops in the Niger Delta, Aba, 1964, page 30). On this general point see "The Multiplicity of Missions", L. Byrde, in The Church Missionary Review, vol. LXIV, no. 769, May 1913.

2. CMS CA3/04A-04B, Journal, 1857, page 25.

The Rev. J.C. Taylor, an African born in Sierra Leone, was a son of liberated slaves from Iboland. He was introduced to the people of Onitsha as the one who would remain to teach them the Gospel of Christ, and to teach the children to read and write. Simon Jonas, also of Ibo extraction, was a member of the mission party.

From this point on, Crowther came into closer contact with Muslims. Leaving Taylor with a group of twelve assistants to build up the work at Onitsha, he travelled north on the Dayspring. He landed at Idah, fifty miles north of Onitsha, to find the place already a stronghold of Islam. He was unable to establish any kind of Christian presence there. The experience at least established a need. What was required was the kind of Christian missionary who was fluent in written and spoken Arabic and Hausa. In places like Idah it was a matter of prime importance that the Muslim mallams should be met on their own ground. They misrepresented Christianity, in Crowther's view, and their assertions had to be challenged. This could only be attempted through the medium of the appropriate language. Misrepresentation of the Bible could be dealt with by means of an Arabic Bible. The art of disputation had to be practised. The Christians might not be able to convert Muslims by these methods, but Crowther felt that for the sake of the pagans it was worth demonstrating that the ruling Muslim group had not said the last word about Christianity. It became his own practice to read aloud from an Arabic Bible when he visited Muslim native authorities, passing his copy of the Scriptures to the mallams who were in attendance.

The expedition arrived at Lokoja on 12 August. Along with Onitsha, Lokoja had been selected by the Christian party as the site for a mission station. The town was situated at the confluence of the Niger and the Benue. The reception by local Muslims was not hostile. They too had a religion to preach as well as to practise. A copy of the Qur'ān was brought out. Crowther's Arabic interpreter, Kasumo, was able to read aloud from the opening sūrahs. Baikie's Fulbe interpreter - Abdul Kader - also read aloud, and showed his familiarity with the text by reciting at length, as if he belonged to the ḥuffāẓ.[1.]

From Lokoja Crowther moved into the heart of Nupe territory. In September he arrived at Bida where the Muslim ruler, the Etsu Nupe, Usuman Zaki, had his court.[2.] There, as elsewhere, he watched the daily ritual of Muslim prayer, and heard the repeated call allāhu akbar, 'God is most great'. The small Christian group held their own prayers at first light. The Etsu Nupe was remarkably open and raised no objection either to the presentation of the Gospel to his people, nor to the suggestion that the missionaries be provided with a site for a rest house at Rabba, particularly in view of the disaster which overtook the expedition at Jebba.[3.]

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1. The Arabic term for the memorizers of the Qur'ān.

2. He ruled from 1857-1860. Over a hundred years later the present writer was able to follow the route of Crowther, travelling by boat, canoe, road and on foot, and finally visiting another Etsu Nupe in his palace. Crowther's work was well remembered. This writer was presented with a Crowther Bible by the members of the St. Francis Society of the Anglican Church of St. John in Bida before leaving.

3. In 1859 the Rabba station was closed. Crowther said that he was not establishing a missionary centre there, but a missionary rest-house where 'passing agents of civilization could stay and where a missionary of the right sort could 'by conversation ... kind, intelligent and Christian influence ... dispel the mist of misconception and prejudice' that the Muslims had against the Christians'. J.F.A. Ajayi, CMN, page 97.

Crowther installed a young Kanuri called Abegga in the huts built at Rabba. Abegga had been with the explorer Heinrich Barth, and had visited England in 1855. The small mission station did not last long. Following a series of mishaps which resulted in the destruction of the expedition's boat, the Etsu Nupe had the station closed.[1.] The loss of the Dayspring was a major blow to Crowther's plans.

Near Jebba, some fifty miles north of Ilorin, and almost 200 miles up the Niger north-west of the confluence with the Benue at Lokoja, the Dayspring struck a rock and foundered. The crew salvaged what they could, reached the shore by canoe and spent a tempestuous night sheltering from wind and storm. In the morning they discovered that the ship was beyond repair and she was abandoned. This incident was not allowed to pass without comment by the religious leaders of the Nupe. It was interpreted as a judgement by the local deities on the presumption of the expedition, not so much for the alien doctrines they were bringing, but for allowing the use of the colour red - a matter which offended the god Ketsa.[2.]

Crowther's return to Onitsha in the days that followed the wreck of the Dayspring and the events in Nupe territory led to preparations for the journey back to Yorubaland. Behind him he had several experiences of contact with Muslims, not only on

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1. Crowther was informed of the closure when he returned to the Niger-Benue area in 1859.

2. see S.F. Nadel, Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, page 27, pp. 213ff; A Black Byzantium: the kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria, OUP, 1942; CMS CA3/04B, 24 October 1857, pp. 25ff; TBB, pp. 166ff.

the banks of the Niger but further into the interior. In Onitsha, after over a year's absence, he found that the work of mission was proceeding well under Taylor's supervision. The Niger Mission had been established and he felt able to return home - overland this time - by way of Ilorin.

In 1859 Crowther was back at the Niger-Benue confluence at Igbebe, the small settlement on the eastern bank across from Lokoja. There he discovered that some of those who had been interested to learn more about the Gospel had been frightened away because,

> 'All who follow the teaching of the Anasara shall not have a religious burial from their friends, and that they should go to the house of fire prepared for the Anasara where they should have to remain three years, till they have paid some thousand cowries when they shall be delivered and brought to the heaven of Muhammed'.[1].

By the beginning of the 1860's it had become clear that the work of Christian mission in the Niger area had reached a stage which required a more formal pattern of administration and oversight.[2]. New mission stations were being opened. Each needed the services of trained African catechists, teachers, and finally, priests. As the local churches grew it was necessary that they be found priests to administer the sacraments. All this pointed to the need for a bishop. Crowther was the obvious

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1. CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Chapman 1 September 1859. Anasara was the local word used for Christians.

2. Church Missionary Intelligencer of May 1864; 'to delay any longer the native episcopate would be unduly to retard the development of the native church'.

choice. He had virtually created the new diocese, and it was fitting that he should assume the responsibility for supervising its development. Prebendary Henry Venn offered the new diocese to Crowther. At first he declined the offer, suggesting other names. Finally Venn and J.F. Schön persuaded him to accept.

> 'He had in a quiet, unostentatious, and yet unmistakable way proved in himself the latent qualities and capacities of the African and, in a lesser degree, it was also demonstrated in the native agents he employed at the various stations. If he was selected to the highest honour the Church can bestow, he amply deserved it; and the selection was appreciated both in Africa and in England'.[1.]

Crowther returned to England, to be consecrated as a bishop in Canterbury cathedral. On 29 June 1864 - St. Peter's Day - he was consecrated bishop of an area which extended in West Africa from the Equator to the Senegal river. Crowther's appointment was not universally welcomed by those who worked with him. Townsend was clearly disappointed that he had not been preferred. On the other hand, Henry Venn remained a staunch ally of Crowther. Venn's support was based on two important considerations. Crowther was, clearly, the only choice - given that the mission was to be Africanized. The second consideration was that, even allowing for the limited advances in medicine, Europeans were unable to cope with the rigours of climate and disease like Africans.

Townsend's opposition to Crowther's appointment meant that some of the most strategically placed areas in his new diocese were

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1. E.M.T. Epelle, op.cit., page 34; cf. TBB, page 186. Venn nominated him as bishop of 'Western Equatorial Africa beyond the Queen's Dominions'. A Minute on the Constitution of the Anglican Native Bishopric on the West African Coast (1864) is given in Ajayi CMN, pp. 274-277: CMS CA3/04, 23 July 1864.

excluded from Crowther's episcopal jurisdiction. Lagos, Freetown, and the Yoruba mission at Abeokuta were excluded from his charge. The decision to exclude Abeokuta was especially painful to Crowther.

At this critical point of development the church was torn by internal dissension which owed more to racial prejudice than some were ready to admit. Crowther's success in the field was a source of envy and professional jealousy. Africanization of the leadership of the mission was a theoretical concept to which white expatriates could assent in principle. When - as in Crowther's case - the theory was put to the test, there were those who considered a black appointment as premature - or inappropriate for some other reason.

> 'It is reported that we are to have a black bishop, a Bishop Crowther, a bishop of the Niger to reside at Lagos and to have nothing to do with us. He will be therefore a non-resident bishop. I believe it will be done if C.M.S. can do it, but it will be a let-down'.[1.]

> '... It is now expected that we should voluntarily place ourselves under the superintendence of Bishop Crowther. If white men had been accustomed to look up to one as Superintendent it would have been easy to change one for another'.[2.]

> 'I shall not stand in his way, I will help him rather and go to another part of the country wherever God may direct me. I don't believe in his power to become head of the Church here, notwithstanding. He is too much a native'.[3.]

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1. Letter from Townsend to a Methodist friend, Thomas Champness, who was then living in retirement in England. Quoted in CMN, page 194.

2. CMS CA2/085, 29 November 1864.

3. ibid, Townsend to Venn, 28 July 1865. Townsend's caustic last sentence must have been written in the knowledge that the University of Oxford had awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity to Crowther, in recognition of his scholarship in the field of Yoruba grammar, lexicography and Bible translation. The award was made prior to Crowther's consecration.

Opposition such as this made for a compromise which weakened Crowther's authority. The lawyers of the C.M.S., expressed the practical difficulty with customary tact.

> 'There are, however, existing missions of the Church Missionary Society comprised in these limits (of Crowther's diocese) which the Bishops of Sierra Leone have been accustomed to superintend, such as the Timneh mission near Sierra Leone, and Abeokuta near Lagos, respecting which an arrangement must be made by the two Bishops as to the time and circumstances of transfer'.[1].

Crowther did not have the time or inclination to become involved in this internal wrangling, although its effects added to his difficulties.[2]. The distinction between missionary and pastor was not so clear cut to him as it seemed to be to others.[3]. To many Europeans the distinction was one of function. The missionary was the pioneer - preparing the way, preaching the

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1. Part of paragraph 3 of the Minute on the Constitution of the Anglican Native Bishopric on the West African Coast, See CMN, pp. 274-277.

2. The beginnings of the dispute are considered in Ajayi, CMN, pp. 174ff.

3. ibid, page 175. Venn's analysis of missionary strategy and of the needs of a developing indigenous church, and of its relationship to the universal church, are carefully set out in a series of papers which contained instructions to missionaries. These four papers appeared successively in 1851, 1861, 1866, and 1868. Venn's ideas were not limited by a narrowness of view. He proved himself to be ready to adapt to a changing situation, but always committed to the principle of Africanization. His position was influenced by his correspondence with the American secretary of the American Foreign Missions Board, Rufus Anderson. Venn and Anderson distinguished between the task of the missionary and the task of the pastor. Anderson argued that the native pastor, unlike the missionary, required little if any training. In 1862 Venn published The Missionary Life and Labours of St. Francis Xavier. He argued that the failure of that mission in the far east could be attributed to the failure of European missionaries to encourage, select and train a native clergy. For this reason Venn advocated a thorough training for Africans from the outset. All pastors needed suitable preparation and training. The best among them would eventually rise to episcopal rank and lead their churches from within.

Gospel to the heathen and encouraging a flow of converts. The pastor's work began when the preliminary work was done. It was his task to build up the local church and to edify the believers. The missionary remained an outsider in the sense that he was responsible to the home committee for his actions, was supported financially from abroad, and strove to place as little as possible of the burden of his needs on the indigenous believers. The pastor was supported by the local church. By assuming the more static rôle of pastor, the missionary was held to be blocking the way for native catechists and ministers.

This distinction was serviceable, given the fact that there were two separate groups of individuals - the white expatriates and the black local leaders of the church. Crowther was above such a distinction. For him it was impossible to be a missionary without pastoral concern, and without opportunities for exercising a pastoral ministry. His elevation to the episcopate meant that he assumed a considerable pastoral responsibility. At the same time he retained the right to break new ground for the faith and to preach the Gospel where it had not been heard before.

On 24 July 1864 Crowther left England to return to West Africa. He arrived in Sierra Leone on 10 August aboard the Macgregor Laird. He received an impressive welcome.[1] By 22 August he was back at Lagos en route to the Niger mission stations which he had founded. In Onitsha he held an ordination service

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1. TBB, pp. 190ff.

for African ordinands. Further north he held services for confirmation, and continued to exercise his new episcopal responsibilities. In the same year Crowther paid a visit to Bonny and New Calabar to see what opportunities for mission work presented themselves.[1.]

In the months that followed his return, the Niger Mission continued to grow. Apart from the stations at Onitsha and Igbebe, Crowther established work at Idah and Lokoja.[2.] This period was not without its setbacks. At Igbebe a fierce tribal battle was fought. The people of the town were defeated. The buildings, including the mission, were destroyed by fire. Crowther made his way to the scene and confronted the chiefs of the rival factions.[3.]

The Christians who escaped from this situation crossed the river to find refuge in Lokoja. Rather than return to Igbebe they chose to remain in Lokoja and base their mission work there.

The mission at Onitsha also suffered as a result of fire at this time. There were no deaths, but the buildings were gutted. Even so Onitsha remained the key location to which Crowther summoned his clergy to a conference in 1866.[4.]

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1. The initiative had come from the king of Bonny city state, William Pepple, who had earlier addressed a letter on the subject to the Bishop of London; McKenzie IREM, page 47. Crowther seized this opportunity to insist that the wealth of Bonny could be used to establish a self-supporting mission. See E.M.T. Epelle, op.cit., pp. 38-39.

2. CMS CA3/04A-04B, September-October 1864, page 23, and Journal entry of 30 September 1865.

3. TBB, pp. 212ff.

4. See S.A. Crowther, A Charge delivered on the Banks of the River Niger in West Africa, CMS, London, 1866, page 19.

Crowther was unable to spend much time reflecting on the various pressures exerted on him from various sources, both African and European. The practical concerns of supervising the work in his own diocese were too great to allow him to stay in one place for long. The mission station at Lokoja was the place where, in July 1866, he held a service attended by a hundred people, of whom nineteen were Muslims, some of them claiming the distinction of having descended from the line of the prophet Muhammad.[1.] His sermon commended itself to those present, not least the Muslims.[2.] Not for the first time Crowther spoke to a mixed congregation of Africans from three distinct religious traditions, from a background of traditional religion, from Islam, and from a newly accepted Christianity. Nevertheless he did not conceal his convictions that the struggle between various religious traditions could not be resolved at the level of syncretism.

After journeying at this time to Lagos, and up-country into parts of Yorubaland for which he had responsibility, he returned to the Niger in 1867, noting that one of the consequences of the mission to the Niger had been to sharpen the apologetic edge of Islam and of traditional religion alike. Christianity would not just go away. It presented a real challenge to other world-views. In a letter to Venn[3.] Crowther notes how, in Bonny, the challenge

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1. CMS CA3/04A-04B, Journal entry, Quarter ending 30 September 1866, page 2.

2. ibid; See also H.J. Pedraza, Borrioboola-Gha: the story of Lokoja, the first British settlement in Nigeria, O.U.P. 1960.

3. CMS CA3/04 27 February 1867.

of Christianity has been taken up by the traditional religious authorities, who insist,

> 'Our religion is master of the soil, it can plead its antiquity from ancient kings, its patrons, and old mysterious priests, its worshippers and supporters; now we have put the intruder, (Christianity) the new religion in the shade'.

Here was a challenge to the 'minimum qualification necessary for salvation', which Crowther was determined to require of those seeking Christian baptism.[1.] Without going as far as some of his European missionary colleagues would have wished, he did take a stand on some issues, which for him necessitated a fundamental discontinuity with traditional rites and practices. The question of animal sacrifices, involving not only the individual, but influencing the community at large, was just such an issue. In Bonny, in 1867, Crowther achieved a remarkable success in persuading the local rulers to desacralize the iguana. The reptiles were pursued and killed.[2.]

In the north, in Idah, Crowther suffered a reverse. Although on friendly relations with the Ata of Igala, Crowther had to accept closure of the mission at Idah. It would be truer to say that the mission was abandoned rather than closed. Later he

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1. See infra, page 154.

2. TBB, page 206ff; CMS CA3/04 Crowther to Venn, 1 May 1867, of. Exodus xxxii, 20; for an account of a similar incident see Robin Horton, The Gods as Guests: an aspect of Kalabari religious life, Lagos, 1960, p. 16.

was involved in an incident which resulted in his capture by a vassal chief of Ata, called Abokko. In September 1867 Crowther arrived at Oko-Okeyin. Abokko seized him, together with his boat and provisions. The chief's grievance was that he had not been recognised and provided with appropriate gifts by the British merchants who were building up trade in the area. Crowther, as the oldest visitor to the river, was held as a hostage, and a large ransom demanded, amounting to one thousand bags of cowries.[1.] With his companions he was kept in bad conditions.[2.]

Word of Crowther's predicament had come to Fell, the colonial agent at Lokoja, who set out on the Thomas Bazeley to rescue him.

> 'I advised that Mr. Fell should see Abokko and hear for himself what he really wanted, that he might satisfy himself as regards the price charged; at the same time to assure the chief that I have no influence over the merchants, the chiefs, or trading affairs, my simple business being to teach the people God's Book, in the which work I was engaged when he seized my boat, plundered my luggage, and detained me'.[3.]

The ransom was not paid. Crowther and his party escaped, but as they ran to the boat Fell was hit by a barbed poisoned arrow. He died on board, only a short distance from Lokoja. For Crowther the whole incident was a salutary reminder of the imperfections of human friendships. He did not fear the personal danger, but

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1. This represented a value of £1,000 on the Niger at that time.

2. E.M.T. Epelle, op.cit., page 41; cf. TBB, pp. 218-226, quoting extensively from Crowther's Journal; for another view of Abokko's attitude see J.S. Boston, The Igala Kingdom, O.U.P., (Ibadan), 1968, pp. 110-113.

3. CMS CA3/04A-04B, Idah mission report, 1867, page 14. Crowther discovered later that the Ata had met Abokko, and had agreed to share the £1,000 ransom money with him; TBB, page 228.

bitterly regretted the betrayal of one who claimed to be his friend.

> 'This is not the first time that I have travelled in an open boat. I never shrank from the pursuit of my duty from mere personal exposure to dangers common to all travellers by land or by water, but I never expected such treachery from a professed friend; against this I could not guard'.[1].

The mission station at Idah was abandoned after this incident. Reaction to the vigorous missionary activity of the Christians began to grow. The battle was truly on. It is necessary at this point to distinguish between the indigenous response to the Gospel as mediated through Europeans, and the attitude of the local people to Crowther personally. After the debacle at Idah Crowther did not lack some measure of support, and even respect, from some 'mohammedans and a large portion of the heathen population'.[2].

On 2 October 1867 Crowther was in Lokoja, where he met the clergy of his diocese. They presented him with a congratulatory address on his release from captivity. The address reminded him of the troubles which often befell a servant of the Lord Jesus. His escape was providential.[3]. Even though some of the sympathy extended to him came from Muslims and pagans, he did not lose sight of his principal aim. His task remained that of bringing Christianity, 'with its attendant blessings in the room of heathenish superstition and its numberless

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1. For a full treatment see W.O. Ajayi, A History of the Niger and Northern Nigeria Missions 1857-1914, Ph.D. thesis Bristol, 1963, pp. 154-158.

2. CMS CA3/04A-04B, Idah report, 1867, page 21; TBB, pp. 229-230.

3. Epelle, op.cit., page 42.

accompanying evils'.[1.]

The opposition to Christianity was not limited to the northern part of the diocese. After over a decade of steady consolidation new evidence of hostility against the missionaries came, even in Onitsha. This was, for the most part, due to a resurgence of indigenous religion. The local rulers and chiefs, stimulated by the traditional priests, began to criticise their people for defection to the services and practices of the new religion, blaming them for neglecting the traditional rites. The preaching of Christianity and its acceptance by some of the people was alienating them from the indigenous culture, and separating them from the living tradition of their ancestors.[2.]

The difficulties which faced the mission in Onitsha were not resolved when Crowther again had to travel to the north. His relationship with some of the Muslim emirs and mallams was cordial. There is little doubt that this was based on mutual

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1. Annual letter, dated 30 December 1867, CMS CA3/04.

2. The increasing opposition to Crowther and his co-workers on the part of traditional religious leaders, the chiefs, was an important factor in his decision to intensify his mission to the Muslims, from whom he had received notable courtesy. For the events in Onitsha and Bonny, see McKenzie, IREM, pp. 53-55. The disregarding of traditional rites had provoked the chiefs and elders of Onitsha to react to the presence of the Christians in ways similar to those of the chiefs in Abeokuta. The mission at Onitsha was established in 1857. F.K. Ekechi argues that from the beginning there was resistance to the way of life required by the profession of Christianity, because it set aside the traditional customs. See his Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914, Frank Cass, 1972, pp. 17-27. On Crowther's successful struggle against the practice of killing twins, see Epelle, op.cit., page 43; TBB, pp. 231-235; CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Venn, 30 June 1868. On the dilemma facing Christians obliged to eat meat 'offered to idols', see TBB, p. 217, and CMN, page 106.

esteem. With the Etsu Nupe at Bida he was on good terms.

> 'Moslems are forbidden by their religion to take intoxicating liquor. But when the inferior brand of alcohol was introduced into Northern Nigeria, and the effect on the native communities was demoralizing, it was to the Bishop that a Moslem authority, the Emir of Nupe, addressed a petition soliciting his action to effect abolition; he saluted the Bishop as a 'great Christian minister' and called him 'our father'".[1].

It was the Etsu who undertook to see that the affair of Crowther's kidnapping at Oko-Okeyin was investigated. Crowther took with him a copy of the Arabic version of St. John's Gospel, together with another to be sent on to the Sardauna of Sokoto. In addition he presented several more copies to the local mallams.[2].

From this point in his career Crowther was involved in a series of meetings with prominent Muslims. For the next decade he spared what time he could find from his increasing administrative duties to present the Gospel to Muslims. These encounters form a sequence which it will be more appropriate to describe and assess - for the light they shed on Crowther's attitude to Islam - in the following chapter.[3].

Crowther always had to have regard to the policies of the dominant partners in missionary work and administration, the Europeans. In A Charge delivered at Lokoja in 1869[4]. he allied

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1. Epelle, op.cit., page 44. Tolerance for the peculiar needs of Christian (and non-Christian) Europeans ensured that on the occasion of an important anniversary of the late Etsu Nupe, the writer of this study was offered refreshment in the form of an excellent and internationally recognised beer.

2. This incident is recalled in the next chapter. See infra, page 135.

3. See infra, pp. 146-149.

4. CMS, London, 1870.

himself with Venn on the question of developing self-supporting African churches, directed by indigenous clergy,[1] and having a proper regard for the traditions, and cultural achievements of African communities. Nevertheless he continued to see in Christianity the ultimate revelation of truth.

> 'Christianity has come into the world to abolish and supersede all false religions, to direct mankind to the only way of obtaining peace and reconciliation with their offended God'.[2]

Crowther continued,

> 'Christianity does not undertake to destroy national assimilation; where there are any degrading and superstitious defects it corrects them ... African religious terms and ceremonies should be carefully noticed: a wrong use of such terms does not depreciate their real value'.[3]

In 1871 and 1872 Crowther was unable to proceed to Lagos by sea because of an unseasonal fall in the level of the Niger which left his boat marooned on a sandbank. He had to travel overland by a route which took him to Ilorin, and to an encounter with the local Emir. His account of this meeting sheds further light on his attitude to Islam and his approach to individual Muslims.[4]

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1. On 19 June 1870, Crowther ordained his son, Dandeson Coates Crowther, in St. Mary's Parish Church, Islington. It was the first time a black African bishop had ordained his own son.

2. CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Venn, 18 January 1869, page 12; Ajayi, CMN, page 224.

3. S.A. Crowther, Charge delivered at Lokoja, September 13th, 1869, London, 1870, page 19.

4. See infra, pp. 146-149.

In 1877 Crowther visited London once again. He was the first black man to address the Royal Geographical Society. He went, not as a bishop, but as an explorer in his own right, to present a paper about the River Niger. His paper, delivered on 11 June, included details which were of interest to geographers, but in addition he had some things to say on the subject of Islam.[1.]

Crowther travelled widely in his diocese in spite of the difficulties he had with transport. The size of the area over which he had to preside necessitated a change in the administration. In 1878 two archdeaconries were created. The Niger Mission fell within the boundaries of the new Upper Niger archdeaconry, with an African priest, the Rev. Henry Johnson[2.] responsible to Crowther for its work. The rest of the diocese formed the second archdeaconry, that of the Niger Delta, under the charge of Crowther's son, the Rev. Dandeson Coates Crowther.[3.]

The year 1879 marked a turning point. To facilitate the work of visiting mission stations on the Niger, and to provide an alternative means of transport for his representatives, who had hitherto had to rely on the more secular services of trading vessels, Crowther financed the purchase of a river steamer, the

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1. Crowther's comments and the questions of his hearers are discussed infra, pp. 161-163.

2. A Yoruba of Ilorin ancestry, who had studied Arabic in Palestine. His headquarters were at Lokoja. His experience of the difficulties of converting Muslims is expressed in his report, dated 1881. 'There are no more fanatical or bigoted people anywhere than in this part of the world... the rulers of the country know nothing of that compromise called religious toleration, but take their stand on the precise dogmatic teachings of the Koran'. CMS G3/A3/01, Report on the Upper Niger Mission for 1881.

3. See supra, footnote 1, page 104.

Henry Venn. The solution of one problem created several more for Crowther. Now he had a boat - and to that extent he was independent. But the craft had to pay its way. It could not pay its way without offering a passenger service to travellers. The number of potential travellers, who - even to some extent - shared Crowther's interest in Christian mission, was limited. Crowther had less success than he deserved. J.H. Ashcroft, a European, was engaged to run the vessel and to supervise accounts. This was the beginning of a rift in policy. Ashcroft treated Crowther with less than customary respect.[1.] Far from leaving Crowther free to concentrate on supervising the mission, this arrangement hampered his policy of Africanization. European intervention - in administration, in commerce and in mission - grew more marked.[2.] This was in conflict with Crowther's own policy and practice. For him, mission was the means of proclaiming a universal truth in such a way as to discover appropriate local forms for its expression and interpretation. For him, Christianity was neither an agent of colonialism, nor a symbol of colonial dependence. If Christianity called for a radical restructuring of African society in the light of universal principles (by which all existing societies were to be judged), it was necessary to replace outworn institutions in the community with

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1. CMS CA3/04, letter dated 16 August 1880, no. 706.

2. Ashcroft maintained that the growth of 'substantial Christianity in Africa would depend upon European intervention and leadership.' See W.O. Ajayi, op.cit., 1963, page 214.

those which would make for social cohesion, and - at the same time - meet the requirements of the Gospel. Although Crowther was never sparing in his condemnation of superstition, idolatry and inhumanity, practised in the name of traditional religion (or Islam), he was no wilful iconoclast. He was not an idealistic religious zealot for whom the joys of seeing a soul converted removed thoughts about that soul's future needs in a society disrupted by the conversion. Here he had a responsibility to his own people which few expatriates could share - or even understand. Ways had to be found to preserve the strengths of community life in any transition towards Christian belief and practice. Crowther emphasised the importance of the Christian approach to marriage and to family life, by demonstrating its value within his own family circle.[1]

This experience of partnership between black and white, between Crowther and Ashcroft, was not a success. The conflict of policies, and the clash of styles, stimulated Crowther into a vigorous defence of the principle of Africanization in the mission. Crowther could see no reason why African Christians could not assume control over the growing missionary church. In this respect, at least, he had the support of Muslim leaders, who - from their own religious viewpoint - had already achieved what Crowther

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1. On 19 October 1880 Crowther's wife died, after 50 years of marriage, during the course of which she had assumed the responsibility for bringing up the children and running the home while her husband was freed to travel throughout an increasing area of missionary influence. His mother aged 97, died in Lagos, in October 1883.
   Crowther's attitude to polygamy, and to all forms of slavery, is discussed infra, pp. 154-159.

hoped to create, namely, a distinctive community of faith, freed from foreign domination, and able to find local forms of expression, suited to the people's present needs. For Crowther it was not so easy. He had to contend with those whose minds were set on colonial expansion and trade, and who proceeded on the basis of an assumption that in any situation, given the opportunity, the white man would function more efficiently than the black. The equality of all Muslims was a strong card in the hands of those who accepted Islam, and no small incentive to conversion for those who were pagan. Christianity, on the other hand, was no less clear on the subject of the equality of all people before God, but its leaders usually found some way of temporizing on the practice of equality, especially when it came to devolving authority to the Africans.

During 1880 and 1881 there were resignations of various mission agents. The home committee of the C.M.S., asked for a report on the situation. Crowther was neither informed nor consulted. J.L.B. Wood, of the Yoruba mission, went ahead with his report.[1] It contained criticisms of Crowther from several quarters, including the trading lobby, but the bishop was unable to meet any of this criticism, nor defend himself, until after the report was published and circulated. He received the report in October 1880, a few days after the death of his wife. It aroused in him an uncharacteristic anger because he saw it as an attempt to destroy what he had spent forty years in building. This was a time of

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1. CMS CA3/043/13 - report of 1880; Epelle, op.cit., pp. 53-56; TBB, pp. 353ff; Ayandele, MIMN, pp. 208-210.

crisis in the life of the Niger Mission.[1] Although he delivered a full defence against charges of irregularity and of administrative inefficiency, he discovered that his recommendations for the dismissal of some native agents and for the retention of others, were being disregarded.[2] His supervision was becoming more and more nominal. It was Europeans who were making the important decisions. Crowther, though angered, was too old to fight against this trend. Yet his words on the subject were surprisingly eirenic. He did not oppose the appointment of European missionaries to be 'the chief workers', and added, 'we shall be content to work under their direction'.[3]

Nor was his co-operation withheld from Christians who came from Europe as members of his own church. He also extended willing assistance to the missionaries of the Roman Catholic church, who pioneered that church's missionary activity in 1883 to 1884. Three Roman Catholic priests arrived in Lokoja and were soon struck down with fever. Crowther proffered advice and help. Later on when the Roman Catholics moved south to take up work at Onitsha, and to preach the Christian faith from the point of view of 'the one true church', Crowther's ecumenical understanding was stretched to the limit.[4]

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1. See G.O.M.B. Tasie, "The Story of Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the C.M.S., Niger Mission Crisis in the 1880's: a reassessment", in Ghana Bulletin of Theology, vol. 4, 1974, pp. 47-60.

2. CMS G3/A3/02, 1 October 1883, no. 150.

3. ibid, 30 January 1884, no. 48.

4. F.K. Ekechi, Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914. London, 1972, pp. 72-76.

Towards the end of the eighties, eleven young missionaries from Britain, under the leadership of Graham Wilmot Brooke, and known as the Sudan Party, undertook the conversion of northern Nigeria and expected that the task would be completed in six months.[1.] They failed, but their failure, paradoxically, encouraged their supporters at home to cling to the belief that an area dominated by Islam was riper for the Gospel than a pagan area. The facts were different. In the first place large tracts of the north were inhabited by peoples who knew nothing either of Islam or Christianity. Secondly, there was a growing hostility to the mere presence of "whites" - who, whatever their business, were identified as alien Christian agents.[2.]

The Sultan of Sokoto, Mohammed Bello, and the Shehu of Bornu had already insisted that Europeans should not be encouraged to enter their territories on the grounds that, given an opportunity, they would seek to do for the northern territories what others had done in India, that is, to incorporate them in the British Empire.[3.] It could be said that the missionary fervour of the members of the Sudan Party was more than matched by the resolute hostility of the Muslims.

The poignancy of Crowther's position was that by patient and careful work over many years he had begun to build up a relationship of trust with Muslims, to the point where his Christian voice was at least being heard. But this slow progress did

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1. Brooke's Manuscripts (BMSS) F5/3, a letter to his father, dated 29 May 1888.

2. D. Denham, H. Clapperton, and N. Oudney. Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824, London, 1826, pp. 42-49.

3. ibid.

not satisfy the European newcomers.

From the middle 1880's to the end of his life Crowther had to face the implications of growing European influence in the partnership of mission. During the course of his visits to England he had been listened to by enthusiastic audiences. He had succeeded in inspiring some young men to offer for missionary service. By the year 1887 it was apparent that more of these men were making for the Niger Mission. Once arrived, gifted young university graduates like J.A. Robinson[1.] pressed hard for changes in missionary policy, especially in the evangelization of Muslim lands. They wanted speedy action and quick results. Crowther's policy of steady persuasion was called into question.

Crowther could only call on his reserves of tolerance and years of experience to contain the brash enthusiasm of the newcomers, who spent little time acclimatizing themselves and patiently appraising a situation in which their zeal could seriously impede the work of their predecessors.

Robinson took exception to the quality of Christian discipleship which he observed among African converts. He was critical of the work among Muslims. He criticised the administration and financial arrangements at the local level. His answer to these different problems was the replacement of inefficient and ineffective African agents by Europeans. He held that the work would lack depth until sufficient numbers of dedicated expatriate missionaries were deployed to supervise the necessary

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1. A small collection of unpublished papers relating to the work of J.A. and C.H. Robinson, in Nigeria, is in the library of U.S.P.G., 15 Tufton Street, London.

changes. All of this - not so much directly, but by implication - fell on the shoulders of Crowther. His voice was muted. The home committee began to take more notice of the strident criticism of their own young men.[1.] These English Christians were not easy to lead, and Crowther was not the kind of charismatic leader from whom they were disposed to accept guidance. To accuse the bishop of a failure to lead is to misunderstand his approach and attitude.[2.] He was cautious, painstaking, sensitive to the spirituality of the African (though not uncritical of its form and expression), and convinced that progress would come only slowly. The newcomers lacked his qualities of persistent but patient advocacy, and they were unable to see that the act of adopting outward signs of identification with the people they came to serve was compromised in African eyes by the subtle cultural distinctions which remained intact. They came to serve, but insisted on domination.[3.] In Lokoja the members of the Sudan Party became a mission within a mission, assuming a degree of autonomy in directing their own affairs and informing their supporters at home of their activities. Crowther's energies were taxed to the utmost. He was old and hampered by poor vision. The Sudan Party succeeded in ousting the black African Archdeacon of the Upper Niger, Henry Johnson. Their

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1. CMS G3/A3/04, memorandum no. 73, 1889.

2. cf. G.O.M. Tasie, op.cit., page 58.

3. G3/A3/04, 1890, no. 165, page 7. Robinson, acting without authority in assessing the work of the Lower Niger Mission at Onitsha (18-28 August 1890) stated his position, and indicated the extent of Crowther's problem, 'We have come to work as brothers with every sincere true-hearted man. We have no national feeling, but where there is insincerity we do not conceal our conviction that we had better not work with that man'.

activities were destroying the work which Crowther had built up over decades. Their arrival, and their insensitive de facto leadership, began to weaken the concept of an African church, directed by African ministers. This was a disastrous development for Crowther, who noted that the Europeans were

> ' sweeping away all the old Native Working Agents... not excepting the Archdeacons both of the Upper and Lower Divisions , who were both now turned out of the mission .'[1].

Crowther resigned from the Niger Mission Finance Committee. His authority had been questioned and his policies attacked. He could see no reason to continue against the systematic refutation of his work by the members of the Sudan Party, who appeared to be able to count on the forbearance - if not the explicit support - of the home committee. There were subsequent protests at the treatment given to Crowther in his own diocese.[2]. Brooke, who did not have long to live, echoed a note of doubt about the zeal of the Sudan Party, asking rhetorically, if he and his colleagues had

'acted rightly in demolishing the Niger Mission'.[3]

Crowther's work among the Muslims in the north was at an end, although the friendships he had built up with the local rulers served to remind the members of the Sudan Party that their abrupt dismissal of a man, much admired among Muslims for his personal qualities, would not commend them or the cause they represented.

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1. Johnson went to Lagos, assisting his namesake at Breadfruit Church. See CMS G3/A3/04, numbers 136, 165, 177. Dandeson Crowther retained his southern archdeaconry. See CMS G3/A3/05, 1 April 1891, 103.

2. CMS G3/A3/05, John Milum's letter to London, dated 21 January 1891. See also CMS G3/A3/04, number 197, 24 October 1890.

3. ibid, 28 October 1890.

Crowther travelled south into the Delta area, but his removal from the upper Niger Mission did not result in the speedy conversion of the Muslim north which Robinson and Brooke desired. His going had the opposite effect. It was the work of the Sudan Party which trickled to an end. In June 1891 Robinson died of meningitis. Brooke died of blackwater fever in March 1892.

In 1891 Crowther was still vigorously defending his ideas and seeing the influence of the young European missionaries begin to wane.[1] The churches in Sierra Leone and in Lagos supported his call to increase the Native Pastorate, and to establish a self-supporting church.[2] Six months after the death of Robinson, who had done so much to disrupt his work and to alter the strategy of mission among Muslims, Crowther was in Lagos for a period of rest and recuperation. In November he appeared to be recovering his strength, but on the last day of 1891 he died.

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1. On 8 April 1892 Crowther's son, Archdeacon Dandeson Coates Crowther assumed leadership of the newly created Independent Niger Delta Pastorate.

2. Blyden was an important figure in this movement. See infra, pp. 214-216.

4. Crowther's Attitude to Islam.

(a) The personal approach to Muslims.

Crowther's attitude was founded on the conviction that the most complete expression of divine revelation to human creatures is to be seen in Jesus Christ. For Crowther, anything less than this was incomplete - whatever local value and significance it might have. God's relationship to His human creatures was - in Jesus Christ - a personal relationship. As a disciple of Christ, Crowther sought personal contact, not only with fellow believers, but also with those who did not share his faith.

After fifty years of missionary activity in West Africa he provided readers with a brief summary of his attitude to people of other faiths. In Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa[1]. Crowther reflected on a lifetime's work, expressing his original hopes and intentions, and outlining the successive steps in a long and distinguished career. The book was published in 1892, shortly after his death on 31 December 1891.[2]. An interesting feature of this small handbook is the section on proof-texts from the Christian scriptures, prepared to help the missionary to meet the questions and criticisms of those whom he aspires to win for Christ.[3].

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1. EHM, SPCK, London, 1892.
2. ibid, pp. 5-6.
3. ibid, page 25.

A factor which helped to make Islam a focus for anti-European resistance in West Africa was the fact that though - like Christianity - it was an immigrant missionary faith, it had arrived earlier, been disseminated more slowly, and was in the hands of Africans unfettered by European ties. Islam was helpful to many Africans who, in the upheavals of the nineteenth century were looking for roots - and this in spite of the Muslim involvement with the slave-trade. Islam seemed to be a more natural focus for awakening political aspirations than Christianity, which was inalienably identified with colonialism, with dependence, and with European culture.[1.]

Crowther's tolerance did not extend very far when it came to the point of considering the conversion of the individual. He was not interested in syncretism. He made clear that to choose Christianity meant to reject the beliefs and practices of the past. Baptism was a public recognition of discontinuity. On the 14 September 1862, for example, nine people were received into the church at Igbebe. They were the first converts, and made their first communion. Crowther was there to see the results of such preparation.[2.]

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1. Crowther's problems were not confined to the northern part of his diocese. In the south he was confronted by much opposition from the traditional chiefs, and the way of life they represented. See McKenzie, IREM, pp. 70ff. As the European hold tightened, so the process of replacing Africans with white expatriates increased. The West Africa Company replaced Crowther's own son, Samuel, in this way, CMS CA3/04, letter dated 15 July 1878, no. 599.

2. CMS CA3/04A/B. Journal, 1 September 1862 - 19 October 1862, pp. 7ff; TBB, page 180.

> 'These nine persons are the first-fruits of the Niger Mission. Is not this a token from the Lord to the Society to persevere in their arduous work to introduce Christianity among the black population on the banks of the Niger, and that they shall reap in due time if they faint not? More so when the few baptized persons represent several tribes of large tracts of countries on the banks of the Niger, Tshadda, Igaru, Igbira, Gbari, Eki, or Bann, and even a scattered Yoruba was amongst them. Is not this an anticipation of the immense fields opened to the Church to occupy for Christ'.[1.]

Crowther made it a special task to select, train and encourage what, on numerous occasions, he referred to as 'Christian Native-teachers'.[2.] The extent of the ignorance of Christianity, and the strength of prejudice against it, made the work of these inexperienced evangelists very difficult. They were not protected by any law or convention of tolerance. Crowther's attitude to mission was realistic. He accepted that those who proclaim the Gospel will be opposed and misrepresented. The method he advocated was based upon the experience of the early Christians as recorded in the New Testament. This experience he attempted to distil, in simple form, for the benefit of African catechumens and 'Christian Native-teachers' alike.[3.]

He compared the understandable, but crude, enthusiasm of Saul before conversion, with the trusting attitude required of

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1. CMS CA3/O4A/B. Journal, 1 September 1862 - 19 October 1862, pp. 7ff; TBB, page 180.

2. EHM, passim.

3. EHM, pp. 11-12. Crowther makes use of the passages in St. Luke, ix, 49-56, and Acts, v, 34-42.

the servant of Jesus.[1.]

> 'Another course must be pursued with the heathens and Mohammedans. The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient to convince and ready to rescue those who are misled. In weakness instructing those who oppose themselves'.[2.]

When Crowther began he had to be the pioneer. There was no one to whom he could turn for practical help. Not unnaturally he turned to scripture and to the history of the early church. He developed a form of catechism, intended to provide African Christians with practical assistance. An example of his method is provided by the following passage.

> 'Quest. Who are the Doctors, at whose feet we are invited to sit?
> Ans. I. Christ is the chief Doctor, both of the Law and the Gospel; who came purposely from Heaven to this end. For thou art a teacher come from God; "We know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth". Then the lesson from Christ our great teacher is, Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me: this must be done by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, by a skilful application of the Scriptures to the subject in point, and thus let the word of God speak for itself.
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> 2. By studying how the Apostles acted in such cases, both with the Jews and the Gentiles dispassionately, calmly, and in the spirit of meekness, instructing those who opposed themselves. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost is an example of their dealings with the Jews, and St. Paul's sermon at Athens is an example of their dealing with the Gentiles.

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1. cf. Acts, viii and ix.

2. The notion that God's ultimate victory is gained in what the world considers to be failure informed all of Crowther's thinking about the problems of mission. cf. St. John xviii, 36. This did not relieve a missionary of the need to prepare himself for the task. Crowther was not a quietist. His advice to other Christians was that of Paul to Timothy, 'Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine'. 1 Timothy, iv, 13.

3. The Fathers of the Church are our modern Doctors, at whose feet we must sit to learn through their experience and riper knowledge what they have committed to writing for our instruction. The study of such lessons and the imitation of such examples, will greatly sober down our young and inexperienced spirits, when we have to deal with those who think differently from us, if we desire to convince and win them over to the truth.

If we judiciously use the aid which we receive from the Fathers of the Church, we shall at least gain the hearing of our mixed audience, while through the effectual operation of God's Holy Spirit, their hearts will be touched, and fruits of conversion must follow.

In our dealings with the Heathens and Mohammedans we employ the Scripture examples for their information and instruction, without rudely and contemptuously attacking their superstitious objects of worship or their erroneous creed.... The idolaters, having nothing to support their religion, beyond that it was the custom of their forefathers, are sooner brought to reason than Mohammedans.

With these latter the case is different: they have the Koran, which is believed by them to be the last revelation from God through the ministry of the Angel Gabriel to Mohammed his messenger, to back them. The Koran acknowledges the existence of only one true God, who alone is to be worshipped; this is the foundation of their faith. The Koran denies the doctrine of the mysterious Trinity in Unity, which no human understanding can comprehend; the Mohammedans therefore can only be argued with upon the ground of what the Koran admits, in order, if possible, to convince them of the inconsistency of that book, which is the foundation of their faith. Islamism admits the miraculous conception of Christ, and that he was a great prophet; also that the Angel Gabriel was God's faithful messenger to this world from time to time: well, we must build upon this foundation'. [1]

Crowther's starting point for work among Muslims was clear and unambiguous. He was called - as he saw it - to present the Gospel to all. This required a constant personal witness to the truth that is in Christ. In trying to fulfil this vocation he was confronted with a formidable rival - Islam. He was under no illusion about the power of Islam, or about its hold on its adherents. But the work of mission could be considerably facilitated by a diligent study of what Muslims believed. Crowther's study of Islam was not

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1. EHM, pp. 13-16. The italics in the passage are Crowther's.

for its own sake, but to enable him to forge a tool of understanding which could be pressed into the service of mission, and used in his own personal approach to Muslims.

Crowther's early experience of how Muslims behaved to those who did not share their faith was unfavourable. It was a group of marauding Yoruba Muslims which destroyed his village and took him, and many others, down to the coast to be sold for the transatlantic slave-trade.[1] Following his liberation by a British naval vessel, and the beginning of a new life in the Colony of Sierra Leone, he again came into contact with Muslims. The Colony was small. It had to make its way by trade and commerce. Its immediate neighbours lived by other standards. Slaves were needed to work in the factories. Islam was well established in the surrounding territories. The Islamic hinterland attracted the attention of European Christians.

> 'For the early phase of the modern missionary movement, the Sierra Leone hinterland became a sort of rusk on which infant missionary societies cut their teeth'.[2]

The Church Missionary Society arrived in Sierra Leone in 1804. The Colony became a base for the expansion of Christian mission into the interior, to those areas where Islam was already well established. This phase of missionary activity was not completed without great

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1. See supra, pp. 46-49.

2. A.F. Walls, "A Christian Experiment: the early Sierra Leone Colony", in, The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith, Studies in Church History, ed. G.J. Cuming, vol. 6, C.U.P. 1970, page 112; Eugene Stock, HCMS, vol. 1, pp. 82ff; C.P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, London, 1948, vol. 1, pp. 208ff; A.F. Walls, op.cit., pp. 107-129.

cost of expatriate missionary lives.

> 'In the early days the loss of life was terrible; in twenty years the C.M.S. lost more than fifty men and women, yet recruits were always ready to take the places of those who had fallen. Gradually a stable work developed: the colony became a Christian land. It is only to be regretted that its Christianity has not proved expansive, and that the work of bringing the Gospel to the still pagan tribes of the protectorate has advanced only in so far as it has been undertaken by European and American missionaries'.[1.]

Apart from some early encounters with Muslims in Sierra Leone, Crowther's experience and understanding of Islam was limited. Again, the Niger expedition of 1841 furnished him with new data.[2.] His early impressions of the inadequacy of Islam to meet the deepest spiritual needs of his people seem to have been confirmed by what he saw then. Crowther describes an incident ten years earlier in Sierra Leone, where there was, as he put it, "a large population of Mohammedans and heathens liberated from slavery".

> 'One day I had to do with a Mohammedan who had sent his little boy to school with a charm sewn in a piece of leather tied to his neck as a protective; as I would not countenance this in the school,[3.] I cut it off from the boy's neck and gave it to him to take home to his father, and told him to say that such superstition was not countenanced in any Christian school'.[4.]

This peremptory action was not suffered by the boy's father without protest. The subsequent encounter between schoolmaster and irate parent provided occasion for an exchange between Christian

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1. Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions, Penguin, 1975, p. 306.

2. See supra, pp. 56-60.

3. At this time he was a schoolmaster in Wellington.

4. EHM, page 7.

and Muslim from which Crowther was to learn how carefully he must approach Muslims if they were ever to accept the Christian Gospel. The meeting between him and some local Muslim elders was set for an evening a few days after his dismissal of the boy,

> 'when the subjects of Mohammedanism and Christianity would be fully discussed on both sides with deliberation and calmness; which was accordingly done. Although I tried to convince my opponents by arguments from the Bible, and from the translations of Sale's Koran,[1.] that the Bible was perfectly consistent with itself in all its parts, and in all the points of doctrines which it teaches; and that Mohammed could not have denied this if he had carefully studied, and compared one passage with another; yet my Mohammedan countrymen would not listen to any but the one argument, that it was contrary to the Koran to believe that 'God could have a Son'. We had to separate, when they said no human being was able to settle the matter in this world till the day of Alkiama, judgement. This sobered me down a great deal in my zeal, though I did not yet despair of doing some good among the less bigoted among them, in a more friendly and persuasive way'.[2.]

Crowther was recalling this incident half a century afterwards, and his recollection is influenced by the experiences he gained in the interim. It is interesting to note the nature of the sympathetic pragmatism which characterised his approach to Muslims from the outset. His approach was thoroughly Biblical and Bible-based. Mastery of this primary source was essential for the Christian evangelist and apologist. From the beginning he intended that the text of the Bible should be available in the Hausa and Yoruba vernaculars.[3.]

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1. George Sale, The Koran, translation and notes, first published 1734.
2. EHM, page 8.
3. ibid, page 8.

After his ordination Crowther returned to Sierra Leone to take up a post at Fourah Bay College.[1.] At the same time he began to engage in missionary work in the area and sought to use what influence he had to correct the approach of some expatriate missionaries. From January 1844 his work among Muslims in Freetown was a continuation of work already begun by others, but he conducted it along different lines. He did not avoid controversy, but he tried to avoid unnecessary confrontation. He endeavoured to gain a hearing for his ideas by means of patient, personal contacts.

Frontal attacks on Islam were a common feature of the methods of European missionaries, who persisted in making them, long after Crowther himself had shown another way.[2.] The difference between his approach and that of the expatriates was not that Crowther failed to recognise real discontinuity of faith, and the need for conversion, but that he was manifestly more sympathetic to religious experiences of a different kind, and more eirenic in his initial approach. His efforts sometimes failed, as in his meeting with the Shango worshippers.

In 1844 he visited a group of Shango worshippers. It was a Sunday. He made his intentions clear to them. He wanted to present the Gospel. There was a lengthy debate during the course of which they defended their religion on the grounds that it had been passed on to them by their ancestors, and that the gods whom they wor-

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1. See supra, page 61.

2. EHM, pp. 8-9.

shipped were inferior deities, commissioned by the supreme god to supervise mundane matters. On this first visit Crowther met with resistance to his ideas. He returned the following Sunday, by which time they had prepared a reception for him.

> 'On my entering the house, and saluting them according to custom, the women burst out in loud praises of Shango, and the drummers took to their drums, which they beat as loud as possible with great rapidity and noise, so that my voice was completely drowned. At the same time others were boisterous in telling me that the gods against whom I spoke were the gods of my forefathers; and that I could not dare to oppose the worship of the gods at Abbeokuta (sic). Matters were coming to an unpleasant state, when a man, sober and more reasonable than the rest, took me by the hand, led me out, and begged me not to take the matter to heart, as the people were not sober; so I had to return home completely defeated'.[1].

This experience was formative. In his subsequent approach to those who were not Christian, he was not misled into thinking that the processes of conversion were straightforward. His experiences began to formulate a strategy for mission. He realised that he had to study to understand Islam, and traditional religion. In this he was well-equipped with a sense of realism. He knew when to withdraw, and - with different tactics - to engage once more. Above all, at this time, he did not want anything to prejudice his chances of success when the return to Yorubaland took place.

Crowther's sermons to Yoruba speaking congregations continued to bring him into contact with the representatives of traditional religion. He was unable to compromise on the question of the

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1. EHM, p. 11; CMS CA1/079, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25/3/1844, pp. 5ff; TBB, pp. 78-81.

essential discontinuity between indigenous beliefs and practices, and the requirements of Christian discipleship. On the one hand he felt obliged to expose traditional religion as an inadequate source of spiritual power, and to seek its replacement by Christianity. On the other hand he was at pains to observe, to describe, and to understand what he could no longer accept or approve.[1.] His detailed study of the religious rites of African peoples may have had a more pragmatic aspect. By studying the liturgical patterns, and the linguistic terms employed, Crowther was better placed to undertake the presentation of the Christian scriptures, doctrines and patterns of worship, during the course of evangelisation.[2.]

With this intimate knowledge Crowther represented a greater challenge to African traditional religion than did any of the expatriate white missionaries, whose missionary zeal and anti-pagan polemic could not be based on the same kind of cultural and linguistic affinity as his. He was visited by Yoruba priests who were opposed to his evangelistic work because of its disruptive effects on traditional patterns of life. Not even the promise

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1. His study of The Funeral customs of the Yoruba was written in 1844. See CMS CA1/079, Journal extracts, Quarter ending 25 September 1844, pp. 6ff. The full text of this piece of field work is given in McKenzie, IREM, pp. 98-101. See also J.F.A. Ajayi, CMN, page 128; E.B. Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Longman, 1962, pp. 186-193; W.R. Bascom, The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1969, pp. 65-69. Another example of his approach is furnished by his description of the annual festival of Idogbe, held near Badagry. The worship of the black snake, and his comments are given in CMS, CA2/031, Journal extracts, Quarter ending 25 March 1845, page 6; cf. ibid, page 7, page 25.

2. J.F.A. Ajayi, "Bishop Crowther", in Odu, University of Ife Journal of African Studies, vol. 4, 1970, page 8.

made by an Ifa priest, to invoke the name of Jesus Christ before making a ritual sacrifice, could placate Crowther.[1.]

Crowther was sympathetic to African traditions, wishing to understand them, and to present the Christian faith in such a way as to preserve the springs of spirituality, expressed in new forms. He wanted the Yorubas in Sierra Leone to be converted to Christianity, but his experiences - as in the case of the Shango worshippers - led him to the view that the hold of the "devices of Satan" was sufficiently great to keep people in "darkness and superstition", far removed from God.[2.] For understandable reasons he declined to support a suggestion that a large-scale repatriation of Yorubas to Yorubaland be associated with his forthcoming return. He took the view that a general emigration would impede the impact of the Christian gospel in the hearts of those ready "to receive the messengers of the Gospel of Christ",[3.] on the grounds that the influx of pagans would re-inforce the heathenism his mission was designed to eradicate. The Shango incident was still in his mind. His defeat at the hands of "infuriated idolaters, worshippers of Shango; the god of thunder and lightning" provided a salutory lesson.

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1. The notion that Jesus should be accorded a place in the Yoruba pantheon but subordinated to the "great god of Heaven (Olodumare) was in Crowther's view, a "device of Satan". CMS, CA 1/079, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 June 1844, pp. 2, 7ff.

2. CMS CA1/079, page 3.

3. CMS CA2/031, Journal entry, Quarter ending 25 March 1845, page 2.

   '... I am glad that cold water (has) been thrown on the ardour of the people for general emigration, especially such as are pagan worshippers of thunder and lightning, and the introducers of the Egungun to the Colony'.

It is possible to detect in Crowther a complex ambivalence, by which he was able to retain - and sometimes even express - a respect for traditions which his Christian faith otherwise led him to abhor. He was thus able to prepare himself for mission, to work for the removal of all he considered pagan, whilst preserving in his description of what he saw a degree of clarity and objectivity. Genuine, if misguided, faith and religious zeal appeared in some way to commend themselves to Crowther, perhaps because he saw in them a preparation for the Gospel.[1.]

Crowther took people as he found them, but sought to channel their existing reverence for the high God, into the purer worship of the one true God. He sought to reveal and to eliminate the superstition which he saw on every side, and to share with the people his own liberation in both its aspects. It was not enough for them to be liberated physically from the evils of slavery. They also required spiritual liberation from the slavery of superstition.[2.]

On his return to Abeokuta from Freetown[3.] Crowther was held up for several months in Badagry. His contacts with Muslims during this period were comparatively few. There were some in Badagry but they represented a small minority. From time to time he came into contact with Muslim mallams, and even engaged

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1. McKenzie, IREM, page 19; see CMS CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 28 March 1845, pp. 20ff; W.O. Ajayi, History of the Yoruba Mission 1843-1880, M.A. Thesis (University of Bristol) 1959, pp. 99ff.
   cf. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 March 1845, pp. 6, 7, 25.
2. CMS, CA2/031 letter to Greenway, 15 September 1847.
3. See supra, page 66.

them in public discussion.[1.]

Crowther was sharpening his knowledge and his skill in disputation. But his capacity to be objective about what he saw was sometimes strained to breaking point. Two young pupils were kept away from his school because of worship being offered to the river god Osun. He was critical.[2.] Crowther's assessment of the situation at this time was that the people were not only unprepared for Christianity, but unable to accept it. Far from assuming a pragmatic line, by means of which he sought to explain Christian truths to them in the light of their existing understanding of religion, and through which he attempted to show that Christianity was a fuller and truer expression of a truth they already held, he came to see that the element of discontinuity was so great, that the gulf could not be bridged without some careful preparation. He argued, behind an often quoted statement, that "the people feel there must be a change in their religious system".[3.] It was Islam which Crowther saw at this stage as a not altogether unhelpful ally in this period of transition.

It was through the work of Muslim traders and itinerant scholars that many towns and village communities had been opened up to the outside world long before the arrival of

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1. McKenzie, IREM, p. 20; CMS, CA2/031. Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 June 1845, pp. 4ff, 17, and 25 September 1845, p. 4ff.

2. CMS, CA2/031 Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 June 1846, page 6. This kind of worship was "folly". The people had sunk to a notable "depth of degradation".

3. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 September 1846, page 20.

Crowther and his missionary colleagues. Although many professing Muslims were guilty of syncretism, conveniently wedding Islamic doctrine to traditional African practices, Islam was having the effect of challenging the power and authority of local Ifa priests, and of asserting, however inconsistently, the oneness of God, the universal brotherhood of Islam, and the need for an observance of Muslim ethical laws as expressed in the Qur'ān. Islam pointed to the wider world beyond the family and tribal loyalties. Animistic beliefs were not held to be opposed to the practice of Islam in every way. The work and witness of these early Muslim pioneers, who were not Muslim missionaries in the strict sense, helped to prepare the way for the Muslim teachers who came later.[1.] Before the end of Crowther's life there was to be a clear division within Islam itself between the Muslim purists, and those whose profession of Islam was in the opinion of the former, fatally compromised.[2.]

Muslims remained among Crowther's most ardent admirers, and were often to be found listening to his sermons. He recalls one occasion on which he spoke to two Muslims after they had been listening to his sermon. He faced them with a stark choice of confessing Christ or of paying the price of disbelief. They do

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1. See C.C. Stewart, Islam and Social Order in Mauretania, Oxford, 1973, pp. 2ff; L.O. Sanneh, The Jakhanke, International African Institute, 1979, pp. 147-184.

2. Islam in Nigeria (initially in Hausaland) was to be profoundly influenced, and renewed, by the work of the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio (1754-1817), according to whom the duty to punish apostasy and shirk was a sufficient justification for armed intervention, and jihād.

not appear to have been offended by his directness.

> 'One of them said that they prayed for God's blessing upon us because we do so much good in this country'.[1]

The earnest preaching of the missionaries, led by Crowther, was not resulting in wholesale conversions to the Christian faith. A process, more subtle and insidious, was beginning. It was a process of secularisation and alienation from the traditional springs of wisdom, morality and religious belief. The constant exposure of superstition and paganism by the Christians sowed doubts about the efficacy of Yoruba rites, without bringing the people to Christian devotion. The people may not have been impressed by what Crowther said, but his advocacy of another faith - so radically different from their own - was enough to make some of them call their own gods to account. What would be the result if the customary sacrifices to the gods were withheld?

Crowther returned to Abeokuta in 1846, to take up his work there. In a report to Venn, dated 15 January 1855 he records differences in the attitudes of various groups to his mission. The Ogboni did not deceive him with their outward appearance of friendship. He detected underneath an enduring animosity and refusal to co-operate. On the other hand he began to adopt a less critical attitude to Muslims, although his opposition to Islam lost none of its sharpness. 'The Muhammadans have mani-

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1. CMS, CA2/031, Journal extract, Quarter ending 25 September 1848, entry for 6 August, page 9.

fested better feelings towards us than in former times'.[1.] Crowther's contacts in the area continued to develop.[2.]

From 1857 onwards, Crowther's contacts with Muslims increased. His relationship with the Nupe people was cordial, as the record of his dealings with the Etsu Nupe in Bida shows.[3.] Crowther had met with open-ness at the hand of the Etsu, Usuman Zaki, but when he recalled this incident, he expressed a harsh judgement of his hosts.[4.]

On his journey from the Niger to Lagos after the disaster to the Dayspring[5.] Crowther visited the Emir of Ilorin. He was received by the Emir, the head war-chief, and the chief mallam. Of that meeting Crowther wrote,

> 'I asked, do you not believe that the Angel Gabriel was a faithful messenger whom God used to send to all the prophets, and whom you believe was sent to Mahomet? That it was the same Gabriel, 600 years before Mahomet whom God has sent to announce the conception of the Virgin Mary?'[6.]

Crowther was attempting to engage in discussion with his opponents in terms which were, presumably, familiar to them.

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1. CMS CA2/031 p. 4.

2. IREM, page 35; cf. C.M.S. CA2/031, Journal entry Quarter ending 25 March 1855, for 31 January.

3. See supra, page 90.

4. For an equally dismissive opinion of Muslims, see EHM, page 22.

5. See supra, page 91.

6. CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Henry Venn, 29 March 1859.

His approach is the fruit of a decision to appeal to rational argument. Was it likely that the Angel who was, at a later date, the agent of God's revelation to the prophet Muhammad, would so mistake his message as to describe Jesus as the Son of God, on the occasion of an earlier visitation? Crowther clearly saw that the greatest difficulty lay in the field of Christology. It was in the interpretation of Christ's nature and mission that Christians and Muslims were (and are) most divided.[1.]

The polite and wary personal exchanges between Crowther and the Muslim authorities did not clear the way for Christian mission. In Islam, the question of belief and unbelief, that is between acceptance of God's revelation and its rejection, has never been a mere choice of one life-style against another. The choice has important, and even dire, consequences for this present life and for the life to come. Furthermore, the rejection of Islam on the part of one who has already enjoyed the benefits of being a Muslim amounts to culpable apostasy.

Crowther objected to the Muslim misrepresentation of Christianity, without explicitly questioning his own attitude to Islam. For him Islam remained a false doctrine and he was not always scrupulous in observing the principle of fairness which he clearly expected to characterize the Muslim approach to his presentation of Christianity.

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1. Not about the fact of the birth of Jesus (either in terms of God's initiative, or as a virginal conception - see Qur'ān 19 16-36), but about the person and mission of Jesus. cf. AQ, pp. 771-75.

The Niger mission continued to progress, based at Onitsha and Igbebe. Crowther was realistic enough to see that the position did not allow for a programme of vigorous evangelization. It was more a question of consolidating the work already begun, and of demonstrating tolerance for the religious beliefs which the surrounding peoples already held. There was a certain pragmatism and expediency about this, but Crowther knew, with reference to Islam, that the chances of winning even small numbers of converts to Christianity were slim.[1.] Crowther's encounter with the Ata of Idah[2.] demonstrates how Crowther combined a courteous interest in the customs and beliefs of others with a flair for interpretation, which provided an opening for the presentation of his own faith.[3.]

Crowther was not, whether by temperament, inclination, or by virtue of his practical subservience to the European-dominated home committee, a master of the <u>strategy</u> of mission, but his <u>tactical</u> mastery in relation to the local situation, was soundly based upon intuition and upon a deep knowledge of African people. His opposition both to Islam and to African religion was, however, never less than forthright, and - in addressing his own supporters on the best methods of carrying forward the work of mission - not infrequently strident, polemical, and conspicuously lacking in the empathy which illuminated his <u>personal</u> dealings with others.

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1. CMS CA3/04 <u>Journal</u> entry, dated 27 August 1861, page 17.

2. See <u>supra</u>, page 89; CMS CA3/04A-04B, the report of the Idah mission, 1857, page 3.

3. <u>IREM</u>, page 52.

For Crowther, the Gospel was the means by which all peoples might receive illumination and deliverance from ignorance and superstition. He constantly argued his case that Christianity was a religion which did not require the believer to chain his reason. On the contrary, Christianity was a faith for reasonable men and women, and its presentation and defence must demonstrate its essential reasonableness.

> 'The servant of the Lord must not strive;
> but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach,
> patient to convince and ready to rescue those
> who are misled. In meekness instructing
> those who oppose themselves'.[1.]

But it was at Lokoja that the main work of mission to Muslims was being carried on in spite of all the considerable difficulties and opposition which Crowther had to face. Lokoja was an ideal situation for a mission with few resources and, in spite of several decades of effort, both in the area and in Europe, with comparatively few personnel. It was situated on the west bank of the Niger, not far from the confluence with the river Benue. At this point, depending on the time of the year, the Niger is navigable for quite large boats which can continue up the river to the north, or up the Benue to the east. In Crowther's day Lokoja was already becoming an important centre of trade and commerce, bringing together a cosmopolitan selection of residents and visitors from many parts of Nigeria and beyond. The few Christians there had an opportunity, not only to preach the Gospel locally, but to individuals who might carry it huge distances up and down the two major waterways.[2.]

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1. EHM, page 13.
2. IREM, page 80.

Why was the Muslim north so attractive to Christian missionaries, including Crowther himself? Several reasons may be given. Here was another meeting ground for the ancient and continuing struggle between adherents of the two religions - between the Cross and the Crescent. But there were other factors of a political nature which Ayandele brings into focus.

> 'Christian missions looked forward to the day when Christian England would avenge Gordon's death and destroy the Islamic theocracy in the Eastern Sudan. While the British occupation of Uganda after 1890 was a guarantee that the Khalifa could not extend the Crescent's frontier southwards there was the fear that the deluge of Mahdism might sweep westwards and envelop what was known as the Central Sudan, roughly the present Northern Nigeria. Moreover, just as the Sudan belt was one of the main foci of international diplomacy of the 'scramble', the only area left for the European powers to share out in the nineties, even so the belt remained the largest single piece of unevangelized territory in the world. And, as if to goad the missionary world into action, statistical evidence was being produced to show that Islam was winning more converts in Africa than all the efforts of Christian missions put together, a claim which the latter would not accept but which challenged subscribers to increase their liberality'.[1.]

Crowther's attitude is made clear in his continuing activity among Muslims. In his work on the Upper Niger he found little bigoted opposition to Christianity. In the light of what happened later this is to some degree a tribute to his own approach. The vigorous confrontation proposed by missionaries, who were looking for speedy results, changed the situation to one in which Christianity was opposed as an intruding faith. When Umoru became the Etsu Nupe at Bida, Crowther's cordial relationship with the leading Muslims there continued. Umoru had taken the trouble to study Arabic. Crowther at once saw in this a means of affirming

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1. MIMN, page 118.

the legitimate interest of a Muslim. He began to make more use of an Arabic Bible, and to encourage his students to do the same. There could be no question of matching the understanding of Arabic texts which it required a Muslim years of detailed study to gain, but the mere fact that there were Christians who were prepared to treat Arabic with some seriousness was an index of their desire to understand what they proposed to criticise.[1.]

Crowther was not slow to criticise superstitious practices wherever they occurred. A curious development within the Muslim communities was the use of the talisman and the amulet, either to ward off sickness, to make a woman fertile, or to ensure success in commercial or military activities. Charms were manufactured out of paper upon which were written verses from the Qur'an. It has been argued that Crowther's approach to this phenomenon was purely negative, but this does not seem to correspond with the evidence. He sought by other means, not inconsistent with his faith, to secure some of the effects which others sought by superstitious practices, always assuming that the end desired was legitimate. So, for example, in the pursuit

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1. CMS CA3/04B, Crowther's report of a visit to Bida, 15 September 1873, pp. 12ff.
Recalling these incidents Crowther wrote,
'I have not met with a stern opposer of Christianity, as far as I had conversation with Mohammedans up the Niger.... The reception of an Arabic Bible, which was presented to the Emir of Nupe, from the Church Missionary Society, with a childlike glee, in the presence of his courtiers, was a proof that this people desire to hear and search after the truth. Another copy was sent through him to Alihu, the King of Ilorin, who is also an Arabic scholar.... In all our religious conversation with these Mohammedans we never met with an obstinate disputer, or a bigoted denial of what we read or said to them'.
- Monthly Reporter of Church Missionary Society, February 1875.

of health and hygiene, as well as in the health of animals, he advocated prophylaxis and scientific methods where needed, rather than recourse to superstition.[1] But his criticisms did not affect his relationship with Umoru. In 1876 Crowther wished to visit two Nupe chiefs. Umoru, realising that Crowther had insufficient personal means to provide an adequate gift, added a length of cloth from his own stock to increase the size of the small parcel Crowther had provided, and prepared a separate gift for two other chiefs for whom the Bishop had made no provision. This act of friendship and solicitude was not lost on Crowther, who found it the more surprising in view of the fact that the faith he professed was in opposition to the religion of his friend, the Etsu Nupe.[2]

The distinctions between Christians, Muslims, and the adherents of traditional religion were, in any case, not always as clear as the purists in each tradition would have wanted. In the small

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1. See, for example, his advice about keeping a horse healthy, CMS CA3/04B, Report on the Niger Mission, 1875, pp. 31ff; cf. J.S. Trimingham, Islam in West Africa, O.U.P., 1959, pp. 112-116; E. Ilogu, Christianity and Ibo Culture, Leiden, 1974, page 88. Crowther was also asked for scraps of the Bible by people who wished to wear them as charms to prevent sickness. TBB, pp. 289-290.

2. CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Hutchinson, 19 October 1876, page 7. This incident has suggested a line of interpretation, succinctly expressed by McKenzie (IREM, page 67),
'But were the two faiths (i.e. Islam and Christianity) not - each one in its own way - identical with the real thing that each - Umoru and Crowther - had got hold of? Was Umoru not more of a Muslim, not less, by his action? Was Crowther not more of a Christian, not less, because he valued Umoru's attitude so highly'; It is not clear what McKenzie seeks to identify as "the real thing" here. The assumptions which a historian of religions brings to the study of data sometimes lead him to see links which are less than substantial. It is on the kind of incident referred to here, as well as to even more commonplace personal kindnesses, that human friendships prosper, but to argue from this to a deeper level of understanding, both within, and across, different religious traditions, is unwarranted.

communities, social interaction was such as to blur the differences and to make for syncretism. Crowther understood the tensions which developed in the life of a community when individual conversions to this faith, or that, supervened, but he was not deflected from his mission[1]. even when the case was put to him locally - particularly when it seemed that children at school, were being educated in ideas which encouraged them to reject the traditions of their parents and elders. The task of education began with the attempt to combat illiteracy. An illiterate people could not read the Bible for themselves - whether it be in the English or the vernacular versions. But what kind of education did parents want for their children?

> 'It was not a demand for general education as such. The trading chiefs who wanted missionaries to teach children English had their own way of bringing up their children to fit into life in the family compounds and the states. They imparted moral and religious education, with clear precepts reinforced by taboos. They gave training in the etiquette and conventions of society; they trained the minds of the children as they taught them to count yams and ears of corn, or to give answers to the conundrums, or to repeat in their own words the fables of the family history. In the moonlight the children played games and told stories and learnt alliterative verses. As they grew older they were apprenticed to jobs or initiated into the further mysteries of life. There was little system, but the parents looked on it as education'.[2].

This was a continuing programme of induction into the coherent pattern of life based upon indigenous traditions. It was a train-

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1. CMS CA3/04, Crowther to Schön, 20 November 1874.

2. Ajayi, CMN, page 133.

ing for a particular way of life. In so far as parents were willing to accept an external influence in the education of their children, it was only to the extent that such training helped the children to cope with the complexities of increased trade with expatriates, and to gain the appropriate new skills. They needed to know something about the mysteries of commerce, as the European would know it.

> 'What they expected from the European was not a substitute but a supplement, a system of apprenticeship by which the children acquired additional arts and skills, the art of reading and writing, gauging palm-oil or manufacturing gunpowder or sugar or building boats'.

This was not Crowther's idea of education for the African people. Still firmly behind Buxton's policy of "the Bible and the Plough", he saw religious education as the key to the curriculum. The changes which the chiefs most feared were the changes for which Crowther strove, and if education could serve to accelerate that process of change he was prepared to accept the dislocation in society which it created. The link between religion and life, between faith and practice, between the individual and the community, was clearly established both in Islam and in the African religious traditions. Crowther's main problem was to commend a religion - Christianity - which threatened to disrupt closely inter-related communities of faith, and to substitute for the communal spirit an impulse which, in some of its manifestations, encouraged not only a fragmentation of society in terms of believers and non-believers, but also a division of life into the sacred and the secular. This was especially offensive to Muslim susceptibilities.

Crowther addressed himself to his colleagues in a charge, delivered on 8 October 1885 on the subject of his attitude to Islam. Not the least of his concerns on this occasion was to counter the pro-Islamic propaganda beginning to circulate in Europe following the return of a number of European short-term visitors to Africa. But the burden of his remarks was directed to his African colleagues.

> 'Mohammedanism arms the hearts of its professors with deadly weapons against Christianity, by denying its fundamental doctrine, the Sonship of Christ, and His Divinity as one with God the Father to be blasphemy according to the teaching of the Koran. Thus their hearts are hardened with prejudices, self-conceit, self-righteous spirit, and self-confidence in their meritorious religious performances, especially in prayer and fasting and the work of supererogation, which they believe they can make over for the benefit of others who are deficient.
>
> They are freely allowed the indulgence of the sinful lust of the flesh; they do not scruple to commit acts of cruelty and oppression on those who are not professors of their faith. Slave-holding and trading is fully sanctioned, to carry out which slave wars are waged against the heathen with great cruelty, in order to enslave them with oppression and violence without remorse, contrary to the law of Christ: 'Do to others as you would they should do unto you'. ... But for all his earnestness the preacher is looked upon with horrified contempt as a blasphemer, because God never had a Son. "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His prophet"'.

The discontinuity between Crowther's personal approach to individual Muslims, and the polemical nature of his public pronouncements about Islam, is again in evidence. At first sight, the passage quoted above is negative, both in its description of the empirical reality of the kind of Islam with

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1. Quoted in TBB, page 289.

which Crowther and his colleagues had to deal, and also with reference to the capacity of Christianity, as an institutionalised system, to transform the situation. But to dismiss Crowther's attitude to Islam as negative in the light of the evidence provided by his personal links with Muslims and his own assessment of their significance, is to impose a value-judgement which owes more to the generally sceptical and anti-dogmatic assumptions of the mid-twentieth century. Crowther's vigorous defence of the Gospel - in spite of the imperfections of ecclesiastical structures and the inability of individual Christians to measure up to the ideal of Christ - meant that there could not, ultimately, be an alternative religion by which human beings could be saved.

(b) The Importance of the Scriptures.

Crowther proceeded to take up another very practical point, drawing attention to the fact that Christians and Muslims (unlike the heathens) shared one important thing in common, namely, access to written records of revelation. The Bible and the Qur'ān could be employed in many instances of dispute as final and objective arbiters of belief and practice. By contrast, the African with no literary tradition, might be thought to be at a disadvantage. The African was not familiar with books and could not read. One of Crowther's major contributions was to produce, and to encourage others to produce, written language from the words spoken by Africans so that, in time, a literary tradition could develop, based on a knowledge of the Christian scriptures provided in vernacular translations.[1.]

Crowther knew Africa well enough to avoid identifying illiteracy as an index of ignorance. The living tradition was preserved within the intricate patterns of oral transmission. Nevertheless the Africans were not themselves the "people of the book".[2.] As a Christian, Crowther felt obliged to prepare the way for the Bible as the Word of God. This meant combating

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1. S.A. Crowther, A Grammar and Vocabulary of Yoruba, London, 1870 (1st edition, 1852); also Grammar and Vocabulary of the Nupe Language, London, 1864, and Vocabulary of the Ibo Language, S.P.C.K. 1882: Crowther's work in the study of West African languages is discussed in "How Yoruba was reduced to Writing", J.F.A. Ajayi, in Odu 1961, and the same author's Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891, pp. 126-133. For an example of Crowther's treatment of Yoruba words relating to traditional religion, and to Islam, see McKenzie IREM, Appendix C pp. 103-104. J.F. Schön produced a Grammar of Hausa, London, 1862.

2. Arabic, ahl al-kitāb, as were Jews, Christians and Muslims, in the classical Islamic formulation.

illiteracy, and opening up the Pandora's box of western European-orientated education.

Until the 1850's Freetown, not Nigeria, was the base for C.M.S., activity in West Africa and it was there that Crowther, having demonstrated his linguistic skill, was encouraged to develop the talent through which he was to become known as "the founding father of Yoruba literature".[1.] Freetown had become a melting-pot for the freed slaves from many different parts of West Africa, where anyone interested in languages, could soon find native speakers. But liberated Africans there were turning to a lingua franca - English. Another group of indigenous people, living around Freetown, the Temne, became a focus of interest for Christian missionaries who were looking for new areas in which to expand mission further inland. C.F. Haensel, Crowther's mentor at Fourah Bay College,[2.] was familiar with the Temne language, and may have encouraged Crowther to take up the study.[3.]

The situation changed rapidly with the decision to send an expedition to the Niger.[4.] Crowther, as well as others such as Townsend and Schön, concentrated on Yoruba and Hausa as a means of reaching the pagans and Muslims of Nigeria with the Gospel.

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1. P.E.H. Hair, The Early Study of Nigerian Languages, Cambridge, 1967, page 7. Hair's chapter, "The Early Study of Yoruba, 1825-1850" (pp. 4-19) gives a critical account of Crowther's achievement as a linguist.

2. See supra, page 53.

3. P.E.H. Hair, "The Sierra Leone Settlement - the earliest attempts to study African Languages", in Sierra Leone Language Review, no. 2, 1963, pp. 5-10.

4. See supra, pp. 55-57.

For over fifty years Crowther and Schön maintained links through their linguistic studies. By constantly having recourse to the Scriptures, Crowther sought to build up a weight of evidence, in response to the specific objections to Christianity which Muslims were in the habit of making. This body of evidence would, he felt, have a cumulative effect in bringing the hearer to a point of decision. It would provide,

> 'authentic evidence of sure witnesses from sources which no reasonable man can deny, if he at all believes that there is a God, the Supreme Being, and that He has a right to communicate His mind and will to man as He thinks proper, and that He has done so at sundry times and in diverse manners, as recorded in the Bible, the volume of holy inspiration'.[1].

At first glance, this appears to beg the question, but the reasonableness of religious belief is notoriously difficult to demonstrate. Here, Crowther, as one who was committed to a particular set of beliefs, is addressing himself to members of another tradition who were equally committed to fundamental assumptions, which - as he hoped - were similar to his own. On the basis of this identity of interest, he hoped, step by step, to proceed to a reasonable defence of the Christian position which, by virtue of its logical coherence, would commend itself to Muslims as reasonable, even though they might decide, for other reasons, to cling to Islam.

Crowther was in the habit of pressing his case with Muslims as far as it would go, based upon his personal faith in the Bible as being the inspired and revealed word of God. His defence of the reasonableness of Christian belief was not an exercise in

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1. EHM, page 25.

natural theology. Nor was it solely a personal and subjective appeal, founded on private experience and personal interpretation of the Biblical texts. He was not a philosopher, nor, in spite of considerable gifts, concerned with academic discourse and disputation. He thought of himself as one who stood in a great historical tradition, founded on Christ, continued in the apostolic church, and subsequently nourished by the Holy Spirit working through the doctors and saints of the church. In one sense, by virtue of their own affirmations about the revelatory activity of God, Muslims were committed to belief in the sacred books, of which tawra (Torah) zabūr (the Psalms) and injīl (the Gospel of Jesus) were important examples. His religious beliefs were rooted in a particular attitude to life, the basis of which was faith in God's power to act. Faith was less a matter of cognitive activity than a dependence upon, and submission to, the will and promises of God. At the same time there is no evidence to show that he exalted personal faith at the expense of reason. He did not have a highly intellectualized view of faith, but did not scorn the use of reason in making his presentation and defence of Christianity more cogent to unbelievers. He sought to persuade others by deploying the appropriate evidence, but did not presume to take the credit, for either the acceptance, or rejection, of the Gospel on the part of another.

> 'If, after all the explanations we can and dare to give of that great mystery of the Christian religion, the doctrine of the Trinity, they will not yet believe, there is no alternative but to leave them to God our Creator and Judge of all the earth who must do right'.[1].

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1. EHM, page 23.

During the course of his return journey from Lokoja to Lagos in 1871-72 [1]. Crowther noted, on more than one occasion, that the degree of hostility between Christians and Muslims was by no means as high as some might have supposed. Two examples will serve to illustrate this. At Ibadan, Crowther noted that the military commander there (the Are Kakanfo) - "though himself a Mohammedan", was taking steps to protect agents of the mission.[2]. At a different level Crowther noted evidence to show that some Muslims were engaged in a re-appraisal of their faith and practice in the light of the highest ideals of Islam, and of the challenge presented to these ideals by the witness of Christians. Crowther did not rule out the possibility of reform within Islam, but only as a preparatory step on the road to Christianity.

The second example comes from a meeting which Crowther had with the Emir of Ilorin.[3]. His own account of that encounter sheds further light, not only on his attitude to Islam, but also on the way in which he approached individual Muslims. His reliance on the scriptures is clear.

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1. Crowther's report of the overland route from Lokoja to Lagos, via Bida, is given in CMS CA3/04A-04B, December 1871 - February 1872.

2. CMS CA3/04A - 04B, pp. 33ff.

3. See supra, page 104.

> 'Before I began to answer the king's questions, I first got them[1]. to acknowledge that they believed in the Koran of the Angel Gabriel (Yibirila), who was always the faithful messenger of God to this world, and was sent to the prophet Mohammed with portions of the Koran from time to time; all this they readily admitted. After this recognition of Gabriel as God's faithful messenger, I asked, whether Gabriel was capable of making a mistake, and whether having delivered one message in the morning, and another in the evening he could deny his having done so in the morning? The reply was, "It was impossible for him to do so". This concession was the opening to our consideration of the doctrines of the two religions, as follows, commencing with the miraculous conception of Christ, and in consequence his Sonship to God, declared by the Angel Gabriel, more than six hundred years before Mohammed commenced his mission: The King himself was the leading person during this discussion: the Lemamu, Chief Priest, next in position'.[2].

Crowther then took out an English Bible, Prayer Book and dictionary as well as his Yoruba translations of Scriptures.

> 'The subject which I first broached was the Sonship of Christ, as declared by the Angel Gabriel; I opened St. Luke i 28-35, which I first read in English, after which I turned to the same passage in the Yoruba translations and read it, and told them that it had been so before the era of Mohammed. The second subject I brought before their notice was the doctrine which Christ taught Himself, John xiv 6, 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me'. Having read that in English, I turned to the same passage in the Yoruba translations, which I distinctly read to them. The third subject was His commission to his disciples, Matt. xxviii, 18-20, which I read in like manner'.[3].

Crowther made a direct appeal to the authority of the Bible, in a manner quite common in his day. His method of "opening up the Scriptures", so that the teachings they contain could be applied directly to the matter of the moment, gave him oppor-

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1. i.e. the King and the members of his entourage.
2. EHM, page 17.
3. ibid, page 18.

tunities for telling contacts with Muslims, who were equally accustomed to approaching the Qur'ān as the word of God.[1.] The historical/critical study of the Bible, which made such great strides in the nineteenth century, had little effect on Crowther's simple Christian piety.[2.] To the further questioning of the Emir of Ilorin, Crowther had a ready answer.

> 'The passage elicited the questions from the King, whether Anabi Isa (Jesus the Prophet) was not to be the Judge of the world?
>
> I replied that I would not answer the question offhand, but would read it to them from the word of Christ Himself; so I turned to Matt. xxv, 31-34, which I first read in English, and then from the Yoruba translations, to which profound attention was paid. This again elicited the question, How soon will He come? The reply was given by turning to Acts i, 7...
>
> ... Some one near the king suggested the question: what does your (Litafi) Bible say of Mohammed? I replied that, as it was not till six hundred and twenty-two years after Christ that Mohammed established his doctrine, our Bible is quite silent about his name...[3.]
>
> ... There was no argument, no dispute, no objection made, but the questions asked were answered direct from the Word of God'.[4.]

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1. It is interesting to note that at the time of this incident, J. H. Lightfoot was taking up the work at Cambridge, for which he subsequently became renowned. See Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961, O.U.P., 1966, page 32.

2. It is not as easy, as is sometimes supposed, to criticise the failure of Muslims to apply the techniques of historical-criticism to the Qur'ān, and to assume that because Christians have seen their scriptures subjected to the closest critical scrutiny, they hold an advantage over Muslims who have largely refrained from this task. For Christians, the scriptures are testimonies to the personal revelation of God in Jesus. It is He who is the 'Word' of God. In Islam it is the Qur'ān which has the status of the primary revelation. The point of contact is not between Jesus and Muhammad, but between the Word and the Word, that is, between Jesus and the Qur'ān.

3. For an alternative view, from the Muslim side, of a reference to Muḥammad in the New Testament, see AQ, page 1540, footnote 5438.

4. EHM, pp. 19-21.

For Crowther it was sufficient that God had spoken through the written revelation. That was something Muslims could understand, even when they could not agree. Mention of "the word of God" raised, for Crowther, the fundamental Christological question, which Muslims answered from a different point of view.[1.] Throughout the course of a lengthy career, Crowther again and again saw that the ultimate stumbling-block for Muslims who approached Christianity was not the fact that Jesus, (ʿĪsā) existed, but the interpretation of his life on the part of succeeding generations of his Christian followers. On one occasion he was questioned by Muslims about Jesus and the Bible. To which prophet did Crowther adhere - to Jesus ("Anabi Isa"), or to Muḥammad? The Muslims who spoke to Crowther clearly accepted ʿĪsā as a major prophet, as a figure whose return to the earth was an essential feature of Islamic eschatology, but as a prophet who, in their own tradition, was overshadowed by Muḥammad (khātam al-anbiyā')[2.] Crowther tried to meet his interlocutors point for point, witnessing to his belief in Jesus, and drawing attention to the fact that Islam appeared some six centuries after the Christian revelation. There was nothing new in these exchanges. What was different here was the spirit in which the exchanges were conducted. There seems to have been no rancour, and a genuine attempt at mutual understanding.[3.]

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1. St. Mark, viii, 29.

2. Arabic for "the Seal (i.e. the last) cf the Prophets".

3. CMS CA3/04B Journal extract, dated 26 October 1857, page 32; CMS CA3/04/5 Crowther to Henry Venn 19 April 1858; Crowther and J.C. Taylor, Gospel on the Banks of the Niger: Journals and Notices of the native missionaries accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857-1859, Dawson, 1968, page 161.

For Christians, no less than for Muslims, the most significant distinction between human beings is that between believers and unbelievers. All other differences and distinctions may be eliminated in the faith and beliefs commonly professed. In Crowther many of these distinctions met. What appears from time to time as ambivalence, or inconsistency, between sentiments privately expressed and opinions uttered publicly, is evidence of the constant struggle he had to proclaim, on the one hand, in unequivocal terms, what he held to be the universal truth of the Christian Gospel, and on the other, to recognise the value and the coherence of an alternative world-view, which he was unable to accept for himself.

In Onitsha in 1866 he addressed his clergy at a conference. He reviewed the work and exhorted his colleagues to strive to bring the Gospel to all who were not believers.

> 'Them you must not censure as ignorant, stupid, and foolish idolaters; your dealing with them must be that of sympathy and love, as you would deal with the blind who errs out of the way'.[1.]

When in the course of his address at Onitsha, he came to consider ways in which his clergy could approach unbelievers he emphasised the need for a non-abrasive sympathy, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.[2.]

For Muslims, Jesus was already a notable prophet, and honoured as such. But the honour which was due to him as a prophet of Allāh was under no circumstances to be confused with the mistaken

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1. S.A. Crowther, A Charge delivered on the Banks of the River Niger in West Africa, C.M.S., London, 1866, page 19.

2. TBB, page 281.

worship which Christians gave to him - worship which was due to God alone. Christian insistence on the divinity of Jesus was (and is) particularly offensive to Muslims because it contradicts a plain Qur'ānic revelation, constantly repeated in their sacred book, about the nature of God.[1.] To associate anyone or anything, with God, in a manner which is likely to compromise his uniqueness, is to make the gravest error (shirk). The Christian mystery of the Trinity, that God is three and yet one, and the mystery of the Incarnation, that God "took flesh and dwelt among us",[2.] are contrary to the teaching of Islam. When argument failed, Crowther was unable to mediate his Christology in credal or propositional statements to the satisfaction of Muslims. Yet this failure gave him an opening to do something else, namely, to express his personal experience of Christ to them in service - as a servant (ʿabd). As a servant of God, Jesus was the example for all Christians to follow. The concept of the servant of God is also a key concept in Islam.

On the prophet Muḥammad, Crowther had words in a vein already familiar to European opponents of Islam. Crowther's friends in Britain may have been reassured by his uncompromising rejection of "this great impostor of mankind",[3.] who was responsible for inflicting "the soul-poisoning doctrine (of

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1. Sūrah, 4 171.

2. St. John, i, 14.

3. CMS CA2/031, Journal entry, Quarter ending 25 March, 1853, page 3.

Islam)" on so many hapless people.[1.] The conventional European attitude to the prophet Muhammad, an attitude almost wholly negative and dismissive, was already beginning to change.[2.] Crowther's assessment was less generous, as indicated by his use of the very strong phrases quoted above. His choice of words expressed deep convictions about what Crowther considered to be the real struggle. With traditional religion there were problems and difficulties but there were signs of progress and of mutual understanding.[3.] But with Islam there could be no hope of accommodation - particularly in its resurgent military phase. Islam had become, for Crowther, "a curse upon Africa, a scourge upon earth", although it is not easy to see why Crowther should conclude as readily as he did that the days of Islam were numbered.[4.]

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1. ibid.

2. The shift in Western attitudes to Muhammad is considered by C.E. Bosworth, in The Prophet Vindicated: A restoration treatise on Islam and Muhammad, in Religion, A Journal of Religion and Religions, vol. vi/1, Spring, 1976, pp. 1-12. Professor Bosworth's, "A Dramatisation of the Prophet Muhammad's Life: Henri de Bornier's Mahomet", appeared in Numen, International Review for the History of Religions, August, 1970, pp. 105-117. See also P.M. Holt's monograph, A Seventeenth-century defender of Islam: Henry Stubbs (1632-76) and his book, Friends of Dr. William's Library, Twenty-sixth Lecture, London, 1972.

3. Even though Crowther's attitude was not consistent. He was suspicious of the tolerance offered to Christians by the traditional religious authorities. Their mischievous intentions were a ploy, see CMS CA3/031, Journal entry, quarter ending 25 March 1853, page 7. This opposition was no less real because it masqueraded as tolerance, "maintaining the principle that everyone should be allowed to follow the religion he thinks good for him". IREM, page 32.

4. CMS CA2/031, Journal entry, Quarter ending 25 September 1850, page 9.

(c) Islam, and aspects of the social order.

The encouragement of literacy, as the key to an understanding of the Scriptures, was not his only challenge. A much more intractable problem lay at his door. The problem was that of polygamy. The Christian position was clear and unequivocal. One man and one wife were united in holy matrimony for as long as they both should live. This was not the African tradition. Furthermore, from Crowther's point of view, it appeared that in the struggle for souls, Islam, with its vigorous permission of limited polygamy and clear delineation of the rights of women, had the advantage of greater attraction to African sensibilities than Christianity. To embrace Islam required (in this highly important aspect of day to day living at least) a less disturbing form of personal accommodation. Christianity required social adjustments of a more difficult nature, involving discontinuity with the past and a major threat to the fabric of society.

So far as the missions were concerned, the discussion of this point has to be set in the context of Victorian sensibility. The dominant voice was that of Christians who saw in polygamy a serious offence to Christian ideal. Crowther came down on the side of a somewhat rigid support for the principle of monogamy, which he viewed, not only as the ideal relationship between man and woman, but also as a test of a candidate's worthiness to

proceed to baptism and thence into full membership of the Church. To all forms of slavery he was implacably opposed.

His line on polygamy was firmly drawn.

> 'I have never at any time had a doubt in my mind as to the sinfulness of polygamy and as contrary to God's holy ordinance from the creation and confirmed in the time of the flood'.[1.]

This approach brought him into conflict with Islam.

> 'Islam in West Africa has generally been tolerant of the traditional beliefs and customs of the peoples it converted whereas the Christian missionaries insisted on a complete abandonment of traditional customs even where these were only remotely connected with traditional religion'.[2.]

Yet Crowther's pastoral concern did not allow him to apply is principle in an exclusive way. Bishop Weeks had expressed ıcern that missionaries were baptizing the wives of polygamists. wther replied that this practice was not a condoning of polygamy, on the grounds that the women concerned were the innocent victims of a social system. In fact his own practice went further when he argued that baptismal candidates should not be presented with demands to renounce everything which appeared to conflict with Christian practice. If they could only be persuaded to accept "the minimum qualification for salvation",[3.] their

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1. CMS CA2/031, Crowther to Venn, 6 April 1857.

2. Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, Faber, 1973, page 310; J.S. Trimingham, "The Process of Religious Change", in Islam in West Africa, London, 1959, pp. 24-40.

3. cf. Acts, xv, 29.

participation in the life of the church would ensure a progressive rejection of all that compromised the life of faith.

> 'We use our discretion that such practices which the laws of the country allow, but not being among those in immediate requirements necessary for salvation, but which Christianity after a time will abolish, are not directly interfered with'.[1].

Henry Venn was not prepared to accept Crowther's position. European missionary leaders took the view that it was because of the prevalence of polygamy that the attempts to convert local African rulers had failed.[2].

Crowther's letters to the home committee upheld the orthodox view that polygamy was contrary to the revealed will of God, but,as has been shown, he did not find it easy to transform theory and dogma into practice when it came to the real needs of the African people.[3]. It could be said that the

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1. CMS CA2/031, Crowther to Venn, 3 January 1857. On the general question of the church's attitude to polygamy, see Lyndon Harries, "Christian Marriage in African Society", part 3 of the Survey of African Marriage and Family Life (International African Institute) ed. Arthur Phillips, 1953.
E. Ilogu op.cit., 1974, pp. 72-74, suggests that Crowther's understanding of the polygamous union was less than profound.
See also J.B. Webster, "Attitudes and Policies of the Yoruba African Churches towards Polygamy", in CTA, pp. 224-246;
G. Shepperson, "Ethiopianism: Past and Present", ibid, pp. 249-264.

2. Ajayi, CMN, page 103; See also J.B. Webster, op.cit., in CTA, pp. 224-46.

3. Several years later in 1887, Crowther again addressed himself to the subject of polygamy. In, Notes on the life of polygamy in West Africa, CMS GA3/A3/03, 1887, he attempts an essay in the theology of Christian marriage in a way which is sympathetic to the best interpretation of the defence of polygamy in traditional societies. One of the difficulties he had in effecting change came from those whom outsiders would designate as the principal victims of the system, namely, the women. P. A. Talbot notes that polygamy was "on the whole greatly approved by women", see The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: a Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Languages, with an abstract of the 1921 census, (4 vols.) Oxford, 1926, volume 3, page 429; Ekechi, op.cit., page 47.

rejection of polygamy assumed the status of a central dogma in the missionary church in Africa at this time. The fundamental misunderstanding of the function of polygamy in African society by European missionaries constituted for Crowther a crucial frustration and a critical practical constraint. Islam was making more converts than Christianity, Islam tolerated polygamy, Christianity did not. It was not enough for European missionaries to infer from this that Africans turned to Islam (if they turned to any religion) because Islam tolerated a greater degree of moral laxity. There was rather more to it than a choice between harder and softer options. Polygamy,

> 'was not just a plurality of wives; it was a symbol of the communal way of life in the family compounds. The acceptance of polygamy by Islam implied the acceptance of the communal way of life, and it was as a unit that Muslim missionaries sought to convert the different communities: to convert the rulers and, through them, by a new law and a new system of justice, make the people progressively Muslim... (The Christians) concerned as they were not only to destroy paganism but also to reform the existing social structure in Africa .. were bound, sooner or later, to attack polygamy. The crucial fact was that they refused to regard it as a social evil which could be progressively reformed, and they declared it a direct violation of the laws of God, which had to be rejected by the faithful ab initio. By this decision they abandoned the idea of leading the whole community as a unit gradually towards Christianity. The outward sign of his inward conviction that came to be demanded of the new convert was not so much the casting away of idols as his total rejection of life in the family compound symbolized by his adoption of monogamy'.[1]

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1. Ajayi, CMN, pp. 107-108; cf. Adrian Hastings, A History of African Christianity 1950-1975, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 115, 236, 300 (note 77); Eugene Hillman, "Polygamy Reconsidered", Appendix to Pastoral Perspectives in Eastern Africa after Vatican II, Nairobi, 1967, pp. 127-138.

To the present day Muslims have retained an almost decisive psychological advantage in this matter. On the one hand polygamy is permitted (though not encouraged), without tolerating promiscuity or allowing a man to take an unlimited number of wives. On the other hand it is consistently argued that monogamy is ultimately the ideal, on the grounds that the Prophet Muḥammad was effectively advocating it when noting that a man was at liberty, in Islam, to take more than one wife, only if he was able to treat each in the same way. Since, presumably, no man is capable of such a degree of detachment, Muslims have argued that monogamy must be the ideal, if not always the empirical reality. By means of such an elliptical interpretation, however, Muslims have not appeared to threaten polygamous societies as radically as Christians. There is a further point to be noted, however, which relates to a significant difference in the strategy of mission between Muslims and Christians. Muslims, with their emphasis on the umma, and on the need to transform any non-Islamic society into an organic community, were less disposed to disrupt existing ties within the fabric of a society. Christians tended to emphasise the individual's responsibility before God, even at the expense of formal societal structures. At the same time it has to be noted that Islam was not identified with the colonial power, as was Christianity, and that the leadership, unlike that of Christianity, was largely indigenous.[1.]

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1. cf. J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, History of West Africa, (vol. 2) Longman, 1978, pp. 480-481.

Polygamy was not the only practice which Crowther considered, not only with regard to its function in African society but also in the light of Christian teaching. As a former slave himself, he was opposed to slavery in all its forms. The evils of the slave-trade had been abolished, but slave-owning was still a feature of African life. The Islamic tradition on slavery was no more clear cut than the Christian, but a Muslim had a loop-hole which a Christian did not. No Muslim could enslave (or keep as a slave) another Muslim, but those who were not Muslims were not afforded the same protection. For Christians the ban on keeping slaves was apparently absolute. Slavery was wrong per se. Once again Crowther tried to play a mediating rôle - opposing the practice in principle, preaching the liberation of every individual through the soteriological activity of Jesus, mitigating its bleakest effects as best he could wherever it was established, and seeking to achieve its abolition by persuasion. He understood better than his crusading white colleagues that an attempt to impose (or even require) change overnight would not succeed. The practice was too well established for that - especially among Muslims. The status of slaves was, in any case, not uniformly abject. Some were better off than others. They were, in effect, free in all but name. To refuse entry into the church to all who kept slaves would have been to limit the church in size and power. But the question remained, could a slave-owner become, and remain, a Christian? Crowther argued that local missionaries must have discretionary powers to decide on each case.

> 'The slaves and masters in this country live together as a family: they eat out of the same bowl, use the same dress in common and in many instances are intimate companions, so much so that, entering a family circle, a slave can scarcely be distinguished from a free man unless one is told'.[1].

On these two crucial issues, of polygamy and slave-owning, Crowther urged his European mentors not to press absolute requirements too hard and too quickly. Venn emphasised the Christian position as he and his colleagues saw it, but left Crowther sufficient room to be flexible on the slavery question only. Polygamy was another matter altogether.

> 'The Committee think there'll be no hesitation to refuse baptism to a kidnapper of slaves unless he has repented and left his evil way, because the practice is directly contrary to Scripture. But the Committee would not interfere with the discretion of a missionary in admitting a slave-holder to baptism. The word of God has not forbidden the holding of slaves, though it has forbidden the oppression and injustice of various other evils which too often, though not necessarily cleave to the character of a slave-holder. Christianity will ameliorate the relationship between master and slave; polygamy is an offence against the law of God, and therefore is incapable of amelioration'.[2].

Crowther was incapable of compromising on these issues. Furthermore, it was Christianity, alone, which provided what his successors might call a theology of liberation. In this regard, Islam was defective, in his view.

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1. CMS CA2/031, Crowther to Venn, 4 March 1857 (cf. ibid, 2 January 1857).

2. From the covering letter sent with his circular paper, printed later at the end of the Annual Report of the C.M.S. 1857. Discretion was also allowed for missionaries to baptize the wives of polygamists, "because this has not been decided in Scripture; it is very conceivable that a wife may have had no power to prevent the polygamy of the husband". See Ajayi, CMN, page 107.

(d) The missionary rôle among Muslims.

Crowther had other, and more sophisticated, audiences. On his several visits to England he had opportunities to address them. Many of his listeners were interested in, and supporters of, Christian missionary work. Others were simply interested in what he was able to tell them about African life - its religion and its culture - or even about Islam. European interest in Africa was growing, for reasons quite different from those which motivated the missionary societies. On 29 June 1864 Crowther was consecrated bishop in Canterbury Cathedral.[1.] In the same year the Anthropological Society held a meeting in London to discuss Africa.[2.] Members of the Society had even attacked missionary work in Africa, and advocated polygamy, as good for Africans. Some had expressed admiration for Islam - in Africa.[3.]

That meeting was one which Crowther did not attend, but there were others at which he felt obliged to inform people in Britain not only about the progress of his mission and of its continuing needs, but also about Islam in Africa. At a missionary meeting at Exeter Hall, London, in May 1873, Crowther said,

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1. See supra, page 93.

2. See IREM, page 48.

3. cf. Eugene Stock, HCMS, vol. 2, page 441; and Church Missionary Intelligencer, July 1865, pp. 193-197.

> 'If it be said that Mohammedanism makes more converts than Christianity, I say it is true. Mohammedanism makes converts because it finds the native mind in a fit state to receive its teaching. The whole country was heathen some two hundred years ago, when Mohammedanism made inroads into the interior; and through slave wars they made conquests, and those who were conquered must become Mohammedan or be sold into foreign slavery. Of the two alternatives, certainly it is better to become a Mohammedan than to be sold away and to be transported across the Atlantic. When I went to the banks of the Niger I saw Mohammedans opening their schools, and men and women went to them. What did they go for? To receive scraps of the Koran. When a man goes to the market he will go to the priest and ask for success in his trade, and a mother will go and ask for prosperity in her household. The Mohammedan priest issues scraps of paper to these people. He tells the man who goes to market to tie one of these scraps round his neck and he will be successful; and he tells the mother who goes to ask for prosperity in her household that it shall be well with her. And the poor superstitious people receive these papers, and when anything happens as was foretold the child becomes a Mohammedan. I was applied to by heathens to give them scraps of paper the same as the Mohammedan priests did, and I refused, Even some of our friends the Europeans, would say: 'Give them papers, it does no harm'. But I said it does a great deal of harm. If I would have given them scraps of paper, I could have given them scraps of the Lord's Prayer, and I have got them to come to me. But these papers would have led them into error, and we do not make our converts that way. God forbid, I would rather let the Mohammedans take possession of the field, and that we should be without any converts at all, than that we should use cunningly devised frauds to deceive souls, leading them into hell'.[1.]

On 11 June 1877 Crowther was in London to read a paper to the members of the Royal Geographical Society.[2.] He had been invited as an explorer in his own right, with first-hand experiences about a little known part of Africa to share with the mem-

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1. Quoted in TBB, pp. 291-292.

2. See supra, page 105.

bers of his audience. Their interest in Christian mission was incidental. Their interest in Islam was a matter of general intellectual curiosity. Crowther used the opportunity to express some of his own attitude to Islam.

> 'The greater portion of the Idola people are Pagans, though with a confused impression of Mohammedanism, which obtains more among the richer persons who can afford to pay the Mallams for such limited instruction as they can convey orally'.[1].

Crowther painted a picture of Islam on the Niger which reflected little of the glories associated with classical Islam. It would be easy to dismiss his terse description of what he had seen as further evidence of his desire to disparage Muslim life whenever he had an opportunity to do so in public. He noted that the religious leaders, the mallams, were themselves singularly unqualified to teach their people. He described them as,

> 'all unlettered Mohammodans, but who have had the advantage of travelling in other parts of Africa, where, in addition to a few sentences of the Koran, and an imperfect knowledge of the great Prophet's doctrines, they have picked up a good idea of business, which they combine with the duties of their office'.[2].

At the close of Crowther's address to the Society, the President, Sir Rutherford Alcock, picked up the lecturer's references to Islam and asked some supplementary questions. It

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1. S.A. Crowther, The River Niger: a Paper read before the Royal Geographical Society, 1877, CMS, London, page 11.

2. ibid.

seemed to Alcock that Islam, with its directness and simplicity, was well suited to the needs of the African. Did Islam purify and improve their social position? Crowther conceded that there had been some beneficial effects as a result of the spread of Islam in the Niger area. Muslims had abolished the worship of idols and fetishes and they had ended human sacrifice, but Islam remained - in the Bishop's view - an oppressive system.[1] It permitted Muslims to keep slaves, provided the slaves were not themselves Muslim. Crowther did not fail to draw a conclusion from this last proviso, which did not help to present Islam in a favourable light. Muslims were forbidden to enslave fellow-Muslims. But, requiring the service of slaves, they procured them from the communities of non-Muslims whom they raided for the purpose. There was then a vested interest in withholding membership of the <u>umma</u> to non-Muslim slaves, for otherwise they would have to be emancipated and replaced. This, in Crowther's view, was a point of marked contrast between Islam and Christianity. The Gospel brought freedom to <u>every</u> individual, and condemnation to any community which did not affirm the unique quality of every human being. Yet the question had already formulated itself in Crowther's mind about the failure of European societies to live by the faith which their own missionaries proclaimed abroad. As he said on another occasion,

> 'Can this religion be true, when those who were born, taught, and brought up in the countries where it is said to be generally professed, live so indifferently to its laws and precepts'?[2].

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1. cf. <u>TBB</u>, pp. 324-325.

2. CMS CA3/04, Report on the Niger Mission 1877, pp. 3ff.

There was something indelicate about the export of religious values with the expectation that primitive peoples would obey moral precepts which Europeans seemed to disregard, but Crowther held fast to the view that the empirical reality, however sordid, could not finally compromise the ideal. From the point of view of successful missionary work among the Africans, however, the realization that many Europeans chose to ignore, or flout, the principles of the Christian faith, which others among their countrymen were presenting to Africans, made the task increasingly difficult. Even so, whatever their personal attitude to the faith, however disreputable their private and business ethics, there remained a residual notion among many black Africans that to be white was to be Christian. Christianity - in spite of significant figures like the two Crowthers and Johnson[1.] - was the white man's religion. From this it was only a short step to the belief that the accelerating process of colonial development, of commercial enterprise, of education based on European models, and of Christian mission itself, drew justification from Christianity. To resist these processes of change meant, to some extent, to resist the religion which appeared to support them.

This trend provided further problems for Crowther, who had to find ways of convincing his compatriots that Christianity was not an exclusively European preserve. To begin with, he had the advantage of being able to point to his own preferment, to the support of Venn and others, and to the emphasis on a church led by indigenous Christians. Later on in his career he had the

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1. Crowther himself, his son (the Archdeacon Dandeson Crowther) and another Archdeacon, Henry Johnson.

melancholy experience of seeing this policy largely reversed, of seeing his leadership, competence, and even integrity, impugned. Leadership was to pass back to the white expatriates after his death, and give further evidence to those who were looking for it that Christianity and the dominance of European culture went hand in hand with the exploitation of Africa and the repudiation of its culture. Failure to secure an adequate African succession led, inter alia, to the emergence of a native church in a state of schism with the parent church. When it came to Islam the situation was rather different.

Not all observers have been able to praise the policy of mission - formulated by Venn and carried through by Crowther - a policy of founding a native church, and then withdrawing, to leave control in the hands of indigenous Christians.

> 'It was high time that Africans should be given a chance to show what they could do. But enthusiasm is no substitute for common sense; and once again the doctrinaire principles of Henry Venn proved themselves disastrous when applied to recalcitrant reality. Crowther was sent off without any European help or support. He had to rely on Sierra Leonean helpers, not all of whom were well qualified or reliable. The bishop had long been separated from his native country. He regarded himself as a 'black Englishman', and was perfectly happy with the civilisation of England as this had developed under the benign sway of the great Queen. He never learned an east-Nigerian language, and was dependent upon unsatisfactory interpreters'.[1].

Crowther failed to express with sufficient vigour his sense of disquiet about the prevailing European attitudes when there might still have been time to modify them. The support upon which he

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1. Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions, Penguin, 1975, page 377. The last sentence of this paragraph from Neill is less than fair to Crowther, who in addition to language manuals, contributed a volume on the Vocabulary of the Ibo Language, SPCK, 1882. See supra, page 142 footnote 1.

was able to rely in 1864 when he became bishop was not sustained, and doubts about his leadership began to be voiced by Europeans who failed to understand his policies. This was no doubt partly his fault - an inability to explain and defend his policies. In 1890, a year before his death, the home Committee abandoned its policy of an African-run church for one in which Africans acted as assistants to the missionary clergy. Within a decade an independent "native-church" sprang up, in which group baptism, polygamy and the use of African music and dance in the liturgies became distinctive features. Had Crowther been allowed a more consciously mediating rôle, the schism might never have occurred.[1.] Crowther was caught up in what might be described as the politics of mission. This was something in which he had little direct interest, something which pre-occupied the minds of Europeans who - not unnaturally - were interested in the success of mission-ary endeavour. This success could most easily be expressed in the statistics of conversions and the number of new mission stations. Those who supported mission in distant parts looked for evidence that the work of evangelization was producing results, whatever the temporary set-backs might be. A further complication, in which Crowther took little interest, was the competitive attitude of the various missionary churches, which proceeded on the basis that conversion from paganism to Christianity was not enough. Of at least as much significance was the kind of Christianity which the convert espoused. As more and more missionaries from different reformed traditions came to work in Nigeria the impact of sectarian

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1. See J.B. Webster, The African Churches among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, London, 1964, page 193; the development of independent African churches preceded more explicitly nationalistic political movements.

rivalry (from which Islam was notably free) was increasingly felt.[1.] This was a further factor of fragmentation. It was the individual who featured both as the focus for missionary zeal of a person to person kind, and as an index of missionary success, on two counts. First,as evidence of continuing direct contact between missionary and the community into which he came, and second, as proof of the second stage contact by means of which an African - once delivered from paganism into "the church" - could still expect to be courted by other Christian groups who coveted his soul for their own denomination. This rivalry was not always abrasive, but seldom less than keen, particularly when the Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The African communities of pagans, animists, Muslims, and less than "soundly converted" new Christians, became a pool in which a variety of earnest Christian fishers of men angled for souls. There is no evidence that Crowther was ever interested in this competition. By temperament and in practice he was notably ecumenical, at least as far as the protestant traditions were concerned. With Rome he was less disposed to be eirenic, and the following passage shows that there were certain basic doctrines on which he was not prepared to compromise either with Muslims or Catholics.

> 'As the Koran allows certain doctrines in the Christian Bible, and God's method of communicating His will to man, so from these vulnerable parts we must wage our good warfare in support of the great Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which the Koran flatly

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1. See <u>supra</u>, page 88, footnote 1.

denies, from the Bible direct. Having no other ground of faith but the Koran, to which they cling with unflinching tenacity, saying 'God can never have a Son', they must be met on that ground; nothing will change them from this belief, excepting conviction from the Holy Spirit, whose existence they deny. They believe in the existence of a being called Yibirila (Gabriel), as a faithful messenger from God to the world, who always brought chapters of the Koran to Mohammed as occasion called them forth. They believed Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed as the six great prophets, as classified and recognised in the Koran. That Jesus was conceived by the wind of a virgin,[1] thus much was recognised: But Mohammed represents God in the Koran as addressing Jesus in the words.

'Is it possible that Thou dost teach Thy disciples that Thou and Thy mother are two Gods'? and Jesus as indignantly denying that he did so.[2]

It is of the greatest importance that provisions be timely made to meet these evils at this early stage of introducing Protestant Christianity on the West Coast of Africa; and all the more earnestly since the Roman Catholics are following our wake with their erroneous doctrine of Mariolatry, and have established themselves at Lagos, Abbeokuta (sic), and may shortly be expected in the Niger Mission also'.[3]

This passage is worth considering for the light it sheds on Crowther's real concerns in the work of mission, and on his methods. He dwells on important and decisive doctrinal matters - here on the weighty doctrines of trinitarian and incarnational theology, not in a narrowly sectarian fashion, but in a way which recognizes the chief points of difference between Christians and Muslims. This is where the "good warfare" is to be waged, and

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1. It is not at all clear what Crowther meant by this curious phrase, even if a comma is inserted after the word 'wind'.

2. cf. AQ, sūrah 5 vv. 115 ff.

3. EHM, pp. 29-30.

Christians of whatever denominational affiliation would be challenged by Muslims to meet them at these points. With reference to his method it can be said that he took the trouble to listen to what his opponents affirmed. He prepared to meet their case by hearing their testimony, by reading their scripture, and by attempting to establish some common ground, however precarious, upon which a genuine encounter could be experienced. For Crowther, however, this was not an end in itself. The more genuine the encounter, the greater the possibility that he would have an opportunity to present the Gospel.

Crowther continued to regret that, for the most part, Christian missionaries lacked the appropriate linguistic competence which would enable them to have direct access to Islamic primary sources. He was shrewd enough to see that Muslims would not respond to Christian overtures unless there was some evidence from the missionaries that Christians took the Arabic tradition seriously. The mallams were proud of their Arabic learning, which linked them to Muslims in other parts of the Islamic world. Preeminent in this tradition was the Qur'an itself. There was no guarantee that Christians would be successful in their meetings with Muslims even if they were skilled in the necessary languages, but Crowther's point remained. Without evidence of a disposition to understand, and a diligent application to language study, the missionaries would not be treated seriously.[1.]

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1. cf. TBB, pp. 158-159.

Crowther realised that the setting up of the Niger mission would make special claims on missionaries who intended to venture among Muslims. Missionaries would have to be prepared to face the claims of Islam. It seems that Crowther wanted to give Muslims the impression that the missionaries had studied Islam, were aware of its claims, and informed about its deficiencies. Hostility had to be understood and countered. Prejudice and bigotry on the Muslim side had to be softened. If mission were to go on to Muslim areas there would have to be understanding of Islam, but no compromise about questions of truth.[1.]

Crowther's attitude to Islam at this point is uncompromising. Access to Muslims is necessary in order to bring them the Gospel. There is as yet no question that the meeting of Christian and Muslim might require the former to reconsider his position and embrace Islam. Nor that in a heathen environment, both Christian and Muslim share a fundamental unity in their worship of the creator God. Crowther's attitude to Muslims was based upon convictions about the supremacy of the Christian revelation, and these convictions were never shaken.

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1. TBB, page 149.

5. Edward Blyden: the Champion of Racial Equality.

'Notwithstanding the widespread progress of Mohammedanism in Africa, and though it has largely influenced the organic life of numerous tribes, in the vast regions of the Soudan, yet the Arabs, who first introduced the religion, have never been allowed to obtain political ascendancy. None of the Nigritian tribes have ever abdicated their race individually or parted with their idiosyncracies in embracing the faith of Islam. But, whenever and wherever it has been necessary, great Negro warriors have risen from the ranks of Islam, and, inspired by the teachings of the new faith, which merges all distinctions in one great brotherhood, have checked the arrogance of their foreign teachers, and have driven them, if at any time they affected superiority based upon race, from their artificial ascendancy'.[1].

'Mandingoes, Foulahs, Jalofs, Hausas, Yorubas, and all the vast variety of tribes whose names are not known to Europe, speak each its own vernacular, but when they meet all prostrate themselves before the great Creator with the same words of adoration and self-extinction - Allah akbar, and grasp each other by the hand with the same language of salutation, in the spirit of the watch-word of the Koran. 'All believers are brethren'.[2]. How is Christianity, bearing on its back the burden of its caste prejudices, the liquor traffic, and its ethical intolerance, ever to make way among these people'?[3].

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1. E.W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, Edinburgh University Press, 1967, page 122. This work, first published in 1887, will be referred to hereafter as CINR.

2. Qur'ān, sūrah 49^{10}.

3. E.W. Blyden, "Islam in Western Soudan", in West Africa before Europe, C.M. Phillips, London, 1905, pp. 74-75.

Long before Crowther's career was coming to an end, and before the cultural heritage of indigenous African peoples became the subject of careful scrutiny either by Europeans who were compelled to recognise the rich diversity of African traditions, or by native-born African scholars whose education both at home and at Western universities had initially conditioned them to neglect their own history, Edward Wilmot Blyden had begun his own serious study of a heritage which he claimed as his own. Well over a generation before the European powers started their colonial scrambles for African territories, Blyden was at work on a programme of scholarly research, political activism and advocacy of the black African cause. He was well equipped for this task of presenting to a largely ignorant western world, as well as to his fellow blacks, a corpus of fact and analysis which would help to remove any lingering misconceptions about the achievements of the Negro race.[1.]

> 'Edward Wilmot Blyden is a leader among leaders of African aboriginal thought; and lest a prophet should be without honour among his own kindred, I am happy... to have, among others, the privilege and the opportunity of giving him the recognition that is his due'.[2.]

Blyden was born in St. Thomas, one of the Virgin Islands, on 3 August 1832.[3.] It was then a Danish island. He was the third

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1. Blyden insisted on using a capital initial letter when writing the word 'Negro'. His usage will be followed here. See CINR, page 9, footnote 12.

2. Casely Hayford in an Introductory Note (dated 4 January 1905) to Blyden's West Africa Before Europe, Phillips (London), 1905, page iv.

3. Details of his early life are contained in the introduction to his Liberia's Offering, New York 1862; The Jewish Question, Liverpool, 1898; the Sierra Leone Weekly News, XXVIII, 10 February 1912, and CINR, "Introductory Biographical Note" by Samuel Lewis, pp. vii-ix.

of seven children, born to parents who were free and literate. Slavery still existed, but his parents were both employed in their own right. His father was a tailor. His mother was a school-teacher. Blyden always claimed descent from pure Negro stock, identifying himself as a descendant of the Ibos in eastern Nigeria. His later insistence on the need to preserve the purity of black African stock led him into bitter controversies with blacks and mulattoes in the United States and West Africa who could not claim to be of pure Negro parentage.[1.]

As a child Blyden lived in the capital, Charlotte-Amelie. With his family he lived in a Jewish quarter of the city, making friends with Jewish children. He attended a local primary school and had extra lessons from his mother. The family attended the integrated Dutch Reformed Church. For two years, from 1842-1844 the family lived in Porto Bello, Venezuela. It was here that his talent for languages was manifested. By the time the family returned home he was fluent in Spanish, but during this period other ideas were at work in his mind. Apart from certain local examples where Negroes had made good in business and commerce, the majority of Venezuelan Negroes toiled as labourers. In St. Thomas they were still mostly slaves. The humiliation of the Negro provoked Blyden to a life-long campaign on behalf of black emancipation.

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1. CINR, pp. 122-123; cf. "The Science of Sociology is the Science of Race", ibid, page 94.

In 1844 he began a five year apprenticeship as a tailor, selecting for his trade the same occupation as his father. At the same time he continued to attend school in the mornings. In the following year an American couple, the Rev. John Knox and his wife, went to St. Thomas. Knox, a graduate of Rutgers Theological Seminary, became the Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church there. He and his wife helped Blyden in his studies and guided him in his decision to seek ordination in the Presbyterian Church. At the age of eighteen, and having completed his apprenticeship as a tailor, Blyden accompanied Mrs. Knox to the United States, seeking enrolment at Knox's old college. He failed to secure admission because he was black. This was in the early summer of 1850, when the clauses of the Fugitive Slave Law were coming into operation. Blyden had suffered humiliation because of his colour, but now he was in some physical danger as a Negro if he chose to stay in the United States. This new law gave federal commissioners powers to arrest runaway slaves and also any Negro who - even if freed - could not satisfy the authorities about his status. Blyden had a difficult choice to make and he elected neither to stay in the United States, nor to return to St. Thomas, but to emigrate to Liberia on the West Coast of Africa which had become an independent state for blacks in 1847.

In making this decision he had been influenced by a group of American Negro Presbyterians who, since 1817, had been advocat-

ing a return to the African homeland for American Negroes.[1.] They took the view that the inferior status of blacks would not alter materially even after the passing of legislation designed by humanitarian whites to ameliorate the social conditions in which Negroes all over the continental United States found themselves. These men saw in the young and gifted Blyden just the kind of future leader that black Africa needed and they encouraged him to go.

On 21 December 1850 Blyden sailed from Baltimore on the Liberia, with his passage paid by the New York Colonization Society. He arrived in the capital of Liberia, Monrovia, on 26 January 1851 after a stormy Atlantic crossing. His arrival in West Africa was the beginning of a systematic endeavour on his part to realise the vision of a group of pan-Negro nationalists and European humanitarians whose ideas had already taken root in West African soil, notably in Sierra Leone and in Liberia.[2.] Blyden did not set to work as a tailor. He turned to further

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1. William Coppinger was the secretary of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, a subsidiary of the American Colonization Society, and he became secretary of ACS in 1864. Coppinger died in 1892, a few months, after the death of Crowther. Throughout his life he was in regular correspondence with Blyden. cf. American Colonization Papers, vol. 21, letter from Blyden to Coppinger, 13 September 1884 on the implications of the Fugitive Slave Law for free Negroes; also Benjamin Brawley, A Short History of the American Negro, New York, 1850, page 84. John B. Pinney went to Liberia as a Presbyterian minister and was Governor for a short period in 1834. Walter Lowrie was connected with the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.

2. cf. C.H. Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, London, 1962, pp. 13-19; Hollis R. Lynch, "Pan-Negro Nationalism in the New World before 1862", in Boston University Papers on Africa, vol. 2, 1966, pp. 149-179; H.N. Sherwood, "Paul Cuffee and his Contribution to the American Colonization Society", in Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, vol. 6, 1913, pp. 370-402; J.B. Taylor, A Biography of Elder Lott Carey, Late Missionary to Africa, Baltimore, 1837; W.M. Brewer, "John B. Russwurm", in Journal of Negro History, vol. 13, October 1928, pp. 413-422. On the early development of pan-Negro ideas in Liberia, see Hollis R. Lynch EWB, pp. 10-31.

study at Alexander High School, working part-time to support himself as a journalist and clerk.[1.] By 1860 he had progressed through the school as full-time student, had been appointed teacher, and finally principal. His first short book, A Voice from Bleeding Africa on Behalf of her Exiled Children was published in Monrovia in 1856. In 1858 he was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church.

With the independent Negro state of Liberia already firmly established, it fell to Blyden and his colleagues to persuade other blacks to leave the United States in large numbers to start a new life in Africa. He summoned all his skills of persuasion to influence the situation. Africa could not thrive without an adequate influx of intelligent and enthusiastic Negroes. In 1857 he tackled the question of the inferiority of the Negro, paying some attention to the original text of Genesis ix, 18-27, which was used to support the view, still held by some Christians, that the children of Ham were pre-ordained to slavery. He argued that these interpretations of the Hebrew Text could not be justified.[2.]

In 1859 Blyden used the opportunity provided by the death of a distinguished Liberian leader, the Rev. John Day,[3.] to launch an

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1. PBFM, vol. xv, 1858, page 34; ibid, 1859, page 31, and vol. xvi, 1860, page 30.

2. A Vindication of the Negro Race, Monrovia, 1857, page 64.

3. Born in North Carolina in 1797, he emigrated to Liberia in 1830. His conversion to the Liberian ideal was all the more significant to Blyden because Day had not been a slave, or even materially affected by white oppression. He had enjoyed freedom and a degree of affluence, yet still elected to go to Africa, where in time he became christian missionary, politician, and finally Chief Justice of Liberia. See A Eulogy of Rev. John Day, Monrovia, 1859.

appeal for patriotism and leadership. On this (and other occasions) he flayed his audience, or readership, with blunt criticism of their apathy, their dependence on imported culture, and their moral decadence. This consistent exposure of human frailty won him few friends. He made an impassioned appeal to the young,

> 'O young men and women of Liberia, arise from your lethargy, shake off your puerile notions and practices'. It is high time to bestir yourselves to be men and women. Let the brave achievements and noble deeds of your fathers arouse you to effort. Let the future glory that awaits your country kindle within you an honourable ambition and urge you onward'.[1.]

Liberia, the first independent Negro state in West Africa was no place for the indolent.

> 'It is the scene of a struggle; a race downtrodden and oppressed, struggles for a place among the nations of the earth. In this struggle, to be faithful is criminal, to slumber is dangerous, to cease to act is to die'.[2.]

He also had words for any would-be politicians in the country.

> 'Liberia occupies a two-fold relation of the deepest interest first, to the aboriginal inhabitants; and secondly, to the descendants of Africa in American thraldom....
>
> Standing upon the soil of freedom in the land of our forefathers, and employing the powerful lever furnished by the combination of Religion, Literature, Science, and Arts, we have a fulcrum and a lever wherewith we can move the world on behalf of our race'.[3.]

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1. New York Colonization Journal, iv, August 1854.

2. E.W. Blyden, Liberia as She is, and the Present Duty of her Citizens, Monrovia, 1859.

3. ibid, pp. 9-10.

Blyden was a visionary, and an idealist. The difference between his ideal of a pan-Negro community in Africa and the empirical reality of Liberian political and social life called forth his trenchant criticism and reforming zeal.[1.] In spite of all the disappointment, he continued to exhort American Negroes to emigrate to West Africa. Negroes who were the victims of racial prejudice had the choice between staying where they were, or leaving for one of the two centres of black freedom, Haiti or West Africa.[2.] It irked Blyden to discover that few American Negroes took an interest in Africa in spite of increasing restrictions at home.

In 1861 he was authorised to travel to Britain and America in order to solicit financial support for the Liberian Government's new educational programme.[3.] In London Blyden raised enough money to build a new school for girls. In Edinburgh he addressed the United Presbyterian Synod on the subject of the needs and aspirations of Negroes, and on the progress of the Liberian experiment. The University of Edinburgh was persuaded

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1. In 1855 Liberia was torn between differing presidential candidate factions. Blyden attempted to reconcile the feuding parties of Roye and Benson. He was consistent in addressing himself to all sections of the community on the basis of his pan-Negro ideal. For him the Liberians were "pioneers of a large empire", one which, incidentally, would rise "on the wings of a Christian civilisation", and so provide an example for the rest of the world. Liberia as She is..., Monrovia, 1857, page 35.

2. The Dred Scott Decision of the Supreme Court in America in 1857 established that a man's slaves were his property, with no rights to have their grievances redressed in a federal court, and that a slave who found a "free" state in which to live remained, technically, a slave.

3. "Mr. Blyden's health has been overtasked (sic), however and the committee have found it necessary to release him from his engagements for a time, that he may recruit (sic) by a visit to the West Indies, his native place". PBFM, vol. xvi, 1861, page 27.

to accept two of his students on scholarships. Before leaving Britain to join his Liberian colleague Alexander Crummell, who was already in America urging Negroes to emigrate, he made the acquaintance of influential humanitarians such as Gladstone, with whom he had continued correspondence. These visits in 1861 were encouraging. When the two men returned to Liberia they were able to report an increasing interest among North American Negroes in sailing across the Atlantic, and also in providing financial support for development projects. On the strength of this, Blyden, Crummell, and a third Liberian - the businessman J.D. Johnson - were appointed by Benson to serve as roving commissioners, with the specific task of encouraging Negro immigration from America.[1.]

At the end of March the commissioners began another round of visits. In 1861 Blyden and Crummell were appointed professors at the newly-founded Liberia College.[2.] Blyden became professor of Classics. During the course of his visit to England he went to Cambridge to take what advice he could get on his new post

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1. African Repository, xxxvi, January 1861, page 87. Crummell was an Episcopalian clergyman who was a Cambridge graduate; PBFM, vol. xvi, 1862, page 20.

2. The College was the first secular institute of higher education in tropical Africa. C.M.S. founded Fourah Bay College at Freetown in Sierra Leone in 1827. Crowther was educated there, see supra page 52. But Fourah Bay was founded to prepare catechists, missionaries and teachers. Secular students were not admitted until 1864. It was not until 1876 that Fourah Bay attained university status, following a link with the University of Durham. On Blyden's appointment, see PBFM, vol. xvi, 1862, page 21.

from the dons there. Later on, in May, the commissioners arrived in New York. Blyden went first to Philadelphia and thence to Washington. What he saw during this journey had a profound effect upon him, and stiffened his resolve to use all his resources to improve the lot of fellow Negroes. The experience of personal humiliation at the hands of whites because of his colour,[1] and the sight of the degradation of other blacks engaged in menial tasks filled his pen with passion. He felt that he,

> 'would rather go naked and wander among the natives of the interior than occupy the position of some of the 'respectable coloured people' I see here...
>
> I thought how sad it was that so many coloured people seem disposed to cling to this land - fearing to go to Liberia lest they die of fever. But are they <u>living</u> in this country? There, colour is the sign of every insult and contumely'. Everybody and everything is preferred to them. Afraid of dying'. Would it not be much better for the whole five million of them to leave this country..? A whole race in degradation'. The idea is horrible'.[2]

In spite of all his powerful advocacy it became clear that the lure of Africa was insufficient to persuade large numbers of Negroes to leave for Liberia. In 1864 Blyden became Secretary for State, a post which carried the responsibilities of deputy president. Blyden had already come a long way, although the political power he was now able to wield was of little interest to him in itself. What interested him was the oppor-

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1. Blyden was refused entry to the House of Representatives because he was black.

2. From a letter to the <u>Liberia Herald</u>, also printed in the <u>New York Colonization</u> Journal, xii, November 1862.

tunity the new post provided to open up the interior of the country. During the course of the next decade Blyden's attention was directed to canvassing support abroad for the concept of a pan-Negro state and the freedom it offered, based on a rejection of the indignities heaped upon a subject people. At the same time he began to realise the significance of indigenous African culture, to campaign for its wide recognition, to interest the widely-dispersed descendants of its rich traditions to return to an environment in which they could naturally flourish, and to seek the spiritual basis upon which the ideal of a liberated and transformed Negro race could develop.

In the earlier phase of his career Blyden had come to accept without criticism the prejudices already current in Europe and America - even among the supporters of black emancipation. Like many other Christians he had come to assume that the few Christian settlements in West Africa were beacons of light beaming civilisation into the dark interior of barbarism. During the 1860's Blyden's views began to change as a result of his detailed investigation into the life of the areas beyond the coastal strip. The more he saw, and came to understand, of the Muslims of the interior, the more he chose to admire. Here were Africans with a life of their own, based upon the strict principles of a religion - Islam - which was no purely localised phenomenon. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and far beyond that, Muslims formed a community which had as its regulating and dynamic force a religious tradition which was largely unknown, or wilfully misrepresented, in the western world.

Blyden began a more systematic study of Arabic in his spare time. He studied the Qur'ān and became familiar with the sharīᶜa. He visited the Holy Land and spent time in Lebanon. He developed a profound respect for the principles of Islam and saw how fitted they were to the needs of African peoples. He remained a Christian, but came to feel that Islam, unlike Christianity, had never imposed restrictions on individuals because of their colour. Racial discrimination was strictly forbidden in Islam. Furthermore, Negroes who had embraced Islam had attained prominence and distinction in ways not apparently allowed for in the development of Christian polity.

Blyden's championing of the pan-Negro cause was stimulated by his investigations in the interior. His admiration for Islam grew, as did his regard for African traditional religion, but at this point he became increasingly preoccupied with the question of racial purity. The religious question was subordinated to the racial question in a way which suggests that Blyden's work was founded upon principles different from those which motivated Crowther, who had by this time begun his work with the Niger mission. Blyden was proud of his Negro ancestry, claiming descent from pure black Ibo forefathers. He described himself as "of ebony hue". He made of colour - and of the ancestry to which it testified - a distinguishing mark which bore witness to differing degrees of ability among the citizens of Liberia. Those who were pure blacks belonged in Blyden's view to an élite. Those - and they were not few in number - who were of mixed blood, part black and white, he considered to be of lower status. These distinctions of light and dark were

important to Blyden for reasons which can not wholly be dismissed as racial. There were political considerations as well. Even so it must be noted that by arguing the case as he did he was ignoring the universalist claims of his own religion - Christianity - to unite all races within a single fold. And he was also ignoring the non-racial implications of membership of the Islamic umma.

In Liberia Blyden took the side of the blacks against the mulattoes. It was a struggle of fierce polemic in the 1860's, and its outcome was exile for Blyden in 1871. As early as in 1862 he saw that American Negroes were not attracted en masse to Liberia. Before the end of the American Civil War (1861-1865) President Lincoln had conveyed to the black population that their emancipation was a matter of prime government concern. In 1862 he declared slaves free. With this reassurance even fewer Negroes decided to hazard their lives in the unknown fastnesses of tropical Africa. Their condition at home still gave substance to Blyden's continuing appeals for immigrants, but there was a real hope that the situation in America would change for the better. He now turned his attention to the Negroes of the West Indies, who had long shown interest in Africa.[1] In 1862 he had re-visited the West Indies, canvassing support for the Negro republic of Liberia, and encouraging emigration. Encouraged by West Indians, the United Scottish Presbyterians

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1. Slavery had been abolished in the British West Indies in 1834. Abolition in the French and Danish West Indies followed in 1848. Negroes in Barbados, Jamaica and Bermuda wanted to emigrate but they did not have the necessary funds. See C.P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, London, 1954, vol. 2. pp. 23-44; A. McKenzie Grieve, Last Years of the African Slave-Trade, London, 1949; A.E. Payne, Freedom in Jamaica, London, 1946, pp. 73-74.

and the British Baptists had established missions in West Africa as early as the 1840's.[1.] This wooing of West Indian Negroes was to lead to difficulties for Blyden in Liberia.

Negroes such as Blyden wanted more immigrants from the West Indies. The mulattoes in Liberia, of whom ex-President Roberts[2.] was typical, preferred the more unsophisticated immigrant from the depressed areas of the southern states of America. The mulattoes wanted to defend their existing political and commercial supremacy against the influx of educated Negroes from the West Indies, who might conceivably threaten their own position. Blyden's support for West Indians and his continuing attempts to open up the interior of the country - an activity which the mulattoes feared might open up new trade routes to their own disadvantage - continued to provoke a clash of interest which provided a focus for Blyden's racial theories. The pure Negroes were on the side of excellence and of development. The mulattoes were on the side of conservatism, and narrowly interpreted commercial interest. This difference of interest and outlook within the new republic led to a conflict between the two groups which culminated in the revolution of 1871.

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1. The West Indian Church Association began to work in Rio Pongo a decade later. See A. Barrow, Fifty Years in West Africa: Being a Record of the West Indian Church on the Banks of the Rio Pongo, London, 1900; A General Account of the West Indian Church Association for the Furtherance of the Gospel in West Africa, London, 1853.

2. Roberts, the first President of Liberia, 1848-1856, was practically indistinguishable from a white.

Matters came to a head over the siting of Liberia College, in which Blyden had taken up a position as Professor of Classics in 1863. The blacks, guided by Blyden, elected for a site inland. It offered a location more healthy than on the coast, and was more accessible to native students. The mulattoes decided on Monrovia itself. Roberts, who was the college president, opposed Blyden's proposal that Arabic should be taught, and in return was accused by Blyden of attempting to keep pure black students out of the College.

> 'Blyden's prejudice was still further inflamed by the fact that he could not stand his wife, a poorly educated woman and, worse still, a pale mulatto. Convinced that the mulatto aristocrats were engaged in plots against him, Blyden now feared that they had a spy in his bedchamber'.[1].

When his associate, Daniel B. Warner, became President in 1864, Blyden accepted appointment as Secretary of State. It was an important post. Liberia wanted Negro immigrants, Blyden set himself to get them.[2]. His colleagues in government authorised an offer of 25 acres of land to the head of each immigrant family, and put up $4,000 to finance a new scheme to attract settlers. This sum was no more than a token, insufficient to pay for the expenses of one group of West Indians. Blyden persuaded the African Colonization Society, whose rules allowed only for the support of American Negroes, to put up a further $10,000, to sponsor a group of emigrants,

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1. R. West, Back to Africa, Jonathan Cape, 1970, page 240.

2. See President Warner's "A Proclamation to the Descendants of Africa Throughout the West Indian Islands, ACS Papers, vol. 13, no. 10.

from Barbados.[1.] They could scarcely do less because those for whom the Society had been founded - the American Negroes - refused to volunteer, but the flow of West Indian immigrants soon dwindled. There was not enough money to maintain the supply.

A spirit of buoyancy and expectation characterised the National Conference of Coloured Men held in October 1864 at Syracuse, New York.[2.] The Negroes had acquitted themselves well in the American Civil War and their efforts had won grudging approval from many whites. But this approval did not long outlast the war and soon gave way to repressive measures - particularly in the southern states - as slave-owners sought to regain their old initiative over slaves, and to make life increasingly difficult for those Negroes who were free.[3.] Blyden had foreseen this possibility and never ceased attempting to persuade those who could come to Liberia to do so. Not unnaturally, following this renewed repression, the list of

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1. The Rev. John McLain, treasurer of the Society, went to Barbados to choose the emigrants. He chose well,
   'The Barbadian emigrants, the most select and highly-skilled group ever to emigrate to Liberia, arrived without loss on 10 May, (1865) and were eventually settled at Careysburg in the vicinity of the St. Paul's River'. EWB, page 34.

2. Coppinger wrote to Blyden (7 May 1864), and McLain wrote a few weeks later (7 Sept. 1864) to the effect that the high hopes of American Negroes for emancipation after the Civil War would be disappointed - in which case large numbers of Negroes would decide to leave for Liberia "as their only refuge". ACS Papers, vol. 13.

3. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, Boston, 1953. At the end of the war southern whites did little to mitigate the terror and persecution which claimed the lives of large numbers of Negro men, women and children. Liberia's offer of 25 acres for each black immigrant family began to look much better than the promise made on the other side of the Atlantic of forty acres and a mule. cf. Lerone Bennett, Before the Mayflower, Chicago, 1962, page 193.

would-be emigrants began to grow. There was insufficient money to pay the costs. The political situation developed rapidly in America, and - so far as the law was concerned - to the satisfaction of the Negroes.[1.]

Blyden was not impressed by these political moves to accommodate the American Negro. He held that for as long as they refused to make a fresh start in a new country carved out of the continent which was the homeland of Negro civilization, Negroes would continue to occupy positions of subservience. Not even the prospect of a handful of Southern State Negroes assuming political offices in a number of different southern states persuaded him that his vision would have to be modified.[2.]

Blyden took the view that the Negro would never be accepted as an equal by whites. He held that the promises now being made to the American Negroes would not be kept, not least because the influx of large numbers of white European immigrants into America would tip the balance between the two races even more in favour of the whites.[3.] What was happening in Liberia,

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1. The first Reconstruction Act was passed by Congress on 2 March 1867, giving northern generals direct command of five districts made out of former Confederate States. Negroes were the beneficiaries with regard to civil and political rights under the provisions of the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution of 28 July 1868 and 30 March 1878, respectively.

2. Fiftieth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society, Washington D.C., 1867, page 15.

3. E.W. Blyden "The Negro in Ancient History", in the Methodist Quarterly Review, January 1869, pp. 71-93.

however, gave little encouragement to the belief that Blyden's pan-Negro ideal would ever be realised there. The same kinds of class and colour divisions were establishing themselves in Liberia to such an extent that Liberia was proving to be no promised land for Negroes.

> 'The entrance to Monrovia reminds one of the entrance to a purely native town where the light of civilisation has never reached, and it gives to the casual observer the idea of a want of firm government, a want of revenue, a want of developmental powers, and the existence of great inertia in the municipal authority'.[1].

Discrimination on grounds of colour in Liberia was exercising Blyden's mind considerably. As champion of the Negro race he praised the virtues of racial purity, opposing miscegenation because (in his view) it weakened the resolve of those with mixed blood to pursue the highest ideals of the Negro race. Where the admixture of races did not tend to apathy and sloth, it tended to exalt white, European, and non-African modes of thought, styles of life and social mores. This colour distinction had established itself in Liberia in a class structure which - from Blyden's point of view - would be defensible only if reversed. The mulattoes accepted the positions of authority and power in government, commerce and education. The blacks were not

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1. J.A.B. Horton (an early champion of the rights and obligations of his own race in West Africa) West African Countries and Peoples, London, 1868, page 270.

of the elite.[1.]

> 'It is the saddest of all things to come here to Africa, and find one's black face a disgrace both in his ecclesiastical and social relations with half-caste people'.[2.]

In spite of this energy-sapping domestic struggle Blyden retained both his vision of an extensive Negro civilisation in Africa and his determination to see it established. Disappointed by the quality of life and achievement on the coast, and frustrated in his attempts to persuade large numbers of Negroes to leave the new world for Africa, he turned with increasing diligence to an exploration of the interior. This he undertook from two points of view - first with regard to a study of the indigenous culture, its history, traditions and religion, and second with reference to its hitherto unrecognized potential for trade and commercial development. In the course of these investigations, which brought him further hostility

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1. The reality of the situation was no doubt different in that the distinction which it suited Blyden's purpose to emphasise was not as clear-cut as his polemic claimed. In 1856 Blyden married into a mulatto family, although he came to regret the union. He married Sarah Yates, the niece of the wealthy vice-President of Liberia, B.P. Yates. He and M.H. Freeman, both resolutely Negro in background and ideals, succeeded in being appointed to senior academic posts at Liberia College. The social divisions based on colour were not exclusive, but real enough to give concern to anyone who recalled the purpose for which the new African republic had been founded. Mulattoes felt superior to blacks. The political factions reflected the colour division. The Republicans were mulattoes, the Whigs the blacks. "The government was formed with the aboriginal freeman the base, the general structure the emigrant negro, the superstructure the hybrid". J.H. Smyth Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Washington D.C., 1879, no. 321, pp. 712-717. Blyden later took a common law wife, Anna Erskine, see infra, page 261, footnote 1.

2. Letter of Crummell to Coppinger, dated 4 July 1866. ACS Papers vol. 13.

from the dominant mulatto establishment, he came to appreciate the strengths - one might say the African strengths - of Islam. Islam had succeeded in adapting to African needs. It had brought cohesion and a measure of integration between various indigenous groups by virtue of its capacity to be disseminated by Muslims, who though not directly missionaries, took their faith with them, commending it to others in the course of day to day activity, in which trade was a dominant factor. At the same time Blyden's activity in the hinterland of Monrovia was an earnest of his political and nationalist designs. As Secretary of State he saw it as his duty to preserve the integrity of the country from the encroachments of commercial opportunists who, for want of adequate policing and national resolve on the part of the Liberian authorities, were flouting the nation's independence and regulations about legitimate trade.[1] The Liberian government wanted to exercise control over its own territory but was being frustrated alike by individual entrepreneurs and the British Foreign Office whose officials cited the provisions of a number of treaties with African chiefs.[2] These treaties were designed to protect the indigenous people from territorial encroachments as well as to ensure that trading in slaves was a thing of the past. Blyden did not get the unqualified support from the British government for which he hoped.

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1. See H.H. Johnston, Liberia, vol. 1, London, 1906, pp. 242ff.

2. Blyden's correspondence on this development, together with his defence of Liberia's attempts to open up the interior can be seen in FO 403/6 and 7, e.g., Correspondence Respecting the Boundaries of the Republic of Liberia, 1861-1871.

His foreign policy was also of a piece with his pan-Negro ideal. He felt that few impartial observers would refuse adequate living space to those engaged in building a Negro republic.

> 'Liberia is the only portion of Africa which her civilized descendants returning from a painful exile of centuries occupy'.[1.]

But this was only the start for Blyden's expanding territorial claims. He wanted closer links with the Muslim states further inland, hoping in time to incorporate them with the growing republic.

> '...it would be sad that this mere speck on the Continent of our fathers should be so circumscribed'.[2.]

Blyden's approach to the bickering and party strife in Liberia was characteristic.[3.] He exhorted all the citizens to close ranks, to pursue common policies designed to further the Negro cause. He advocated changes in the Constitution, demanding that presidential elections should be held after a term of six to eight years, that the Civil Service should be independent of government control, and that arbitrary powers for the appointment and dismissal of government employees should be removed from the President. This advocacy of reasonable democratic rights was no more successful than his campaign to gain international support for opening up the interior. He was opposed at every turn, but persisted with his vision. He spent the

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1. FO 403/7 Blyden to Ralston, 5 February 1864.
2. ibid.
3. See his Independence Day Address, 1865, Our Origin, Dangers and Duties, pp. 21ff.

months of July, August and September 1866 travelling to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. He pursued his studies in Arabic with a view to teaching his own students at Liberia College. Equipped with Arabic, and a knowledge and understanding of Islam, they would be able to go to the Muslim communities in the interior and solicit support for Blyden's pan-Negro republic.

Blyden travelled to Syria after visiting England and calling at Gibraltar, Malta and Egypt. In Egypt he visited the pyramids, carving his name and the date[1.] at the entrance to these ancient monuments of cultural achievement and tradition. Once in Lebanon he assumed the rôle of an ambassador for his country, using the occasion of the anniversary of Liberia's independence to tell his largely American missionary audience less about the reality of life in Liberia than about his own ideals for it. He did not fail to strike the appropriate note which would engage the interest of his hearers. It was a gift he developed as he sought to be all things to all men, provided that the chosen means continued to serve the interests of his vision. On this occasion, it was through the prism of Christianity that he allowed his hearers to share that vision.

> 'Where a few years ago stood virgin forests or impenetrable jungles, we now behold churches erected to the living God; we hear the sound of the churchbells, and regular Sabbath ministrations are enjoyed. If you could see Liberia as she now is with her six hundred miles of coast snatched from the abomination of the slave-trade, her thriving towns and villages, her spacious streets and fine houses, her happy homes with their varied delights, her churches and Sabbath

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1. 11 July 1866.

> schools and their solemn and delightful services; could you contemplate all the diversified means of improvement and enjoyment and indication on every hand of ease and happiness and plodding industry of her population without those feverish and distracting pursuits and rivalries which make large cities so unpleasant; could you behold these things and contrast the state of things now with what it was forty years ago, when eighty-eight pilgrims first landed on these shores, where the primeval forests stood around with their awful unbroken solitude, you would exclaim what God hath wrought! You would acknowledge that the spirit of Christianity and civilisation has moved upon the face of these turbid waters, and that beauty and order have emerged out of material rude and unpromising'.[1.]

In this passage Blyden gave himself licence to persuade by employing all the power of his rhetoric. The rosy picture of life in Liberia was one which he would no doubt have liked others to see. But without painting the lily to some extent he could not hope to interest those in Europe and America who had the resources to bring about real economic and political change in West Africa. At home his position as an influential leader of public opinion was crumbling. His success in advocating the Negro cause, his ability to match the high standards of academic excellence of his European and American partners in debate, and the relentless consistency of his exposure of the second-rate in Liberia, made him a difficult colleague.

After his return to Liberia from Syria he attempted to introduce the teaching of Arabic in the College.[2.] His first efforts were opposed by his mulatto adversaries. They can not have ob-

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1. E.W. Blyden, Liberia: Past, Present and Future, Washington D.C., 1869, page 13.

2. President Roberts opposed the programme. See Blyden's letter to Coppinger, dated 5 July 1879, ACS Papers, vol. 19.

jected to the teaching of Arabic per se, nor to the dissemination of information about Islam. It was the practical use to which they feared Blyden would seek to put this new knowledge that irked them into opposition. For Blyden, Arabic was a key to open the hitherto locked doors of a civilisation in the interior. In the attempt to open up this hinterland he encouraged exploration. This too was opposed by the coastal establishment who feared that new routes and markets for trade would disrupt their existing monopoly. On 14 February 1868 Benjamin Anderson started out on an expedition which was to last just over a year, and which was to take his party to the Islamic Kingdom of Musardu.[1] It was Blyden who had made this expedition possible by persuading Henry Schieffelin and Caleb Swan - two businessmen from New York - to put up the money. The project did not commend itself to Blyden's opponents. Nor did his decision to use the gift of £500 from the Leeds cotton-manufacturer, Robert Arthington, to establish a small school at Vonswah, a small Muslim town in the interior.

At this time, Blyden felt that his friend, Edward James Roye - another pure black, of Ibo descent - would make a good President of Liberia. Roye won the sharp campaign when he was elected in 1870. He defeated the former President, James Sprigg Payne, who was a mulatto.[2] From Blyden's point of view Roye was an admirable choice. He was black, and agreed with Blyden that

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1. B. Anderson, Narrative of a Journey to Musardu, the capital of the Western Mandingoes, New York, 1870.

2. Lynch, EWB, pp. 49ff.

the future of Liberia was linked with her black citizens, who only had to be encouraged in order to realise their potential. He was a graduate of an American College, and had solid plans to set up an effective system of schooling in Liberia. He was a competent businessman who wanted to strengthen the country's economy and had developed plans to that end. But he needed foreign capital. In 1871 a loan of £100,000 was negotiated on the English market on terms entirely favourable to the backers.[1.] Roye accepted the terms although he was not personally involved in the negotiations. When the terms were made known he came under fire from his mulatto critics. A further source of friction was over an alteration to the constitution, by which the presidential term was to be extended from two to four years. This originally came up in 1869.[2.] It was supported by the Payne faction, who no doubt sought to extend the administration of their own candidate. In the event it was Roye who won the election and who insisted on the extended term. This bitter constitutional issue was not speedily resolved. Roberts, who had been President before, declared himself a candidate for the 1871 election, which on Roye's ruling was two years too early for another election. Roye banned the election but it went ahead and Roberts was elected. Roye was deposed at a special session of the Senate and the House of Representatives, shortly after being imprisoned by his opponents. During the course of an

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1. George Brown, The Economic History of Liberia, Washington D.C., 1941, page 143.

2. J.M. Turner, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Washington D.C., 1873, page 325.

attempted escape from prison Roye lost his life.[1.] The disturbances in the country prompted an American missionary to write home

> 'Thousands would gladly return to America if they had the means to do so. Military arrests are the usual sights nowadays. Men are arrested and imprisoned for no other cause than they differ from the dominant party who deposed President Roye'.[2.]

Blyden's support for Roye was not the main reason for his sudden exit from Liberia. Five months before Roye was deposed Blyden left the country as a result of the charge (which he never ceased to deny) that he had committed adultery with Roye's Negro wife.[3.] But for the help of his friend D.B. Warner, Blyden would probably have been lynched by a hostile crowd who, incited not only by this immediate charge of infidelity but also by his increasingly vituperative anti-mulatto polemic,[4.] dragged him by a rope around his neck along the street on 5 May 1871. For two decades he had laboured to build a republic in Liberia which would benefit the Negro. Now he had to take refuge in Sierra Leone. Stripped of direct political

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1. The precise details of Roye's death are not known. The evidence is conflicting. See letters from Blyden to Coppinger, 22 Oct. 1887, in ACS Papers, vol. 24; W.W. Reade, The African Sketch-Book, London, 1873, page 250.

2. H.W. Erskine, letter to J.C. Lowrie, 6 Nov. 1871, PBFM Papers, vol. 9.

3. He was formally cleared of this charge by the members of the Presbytery who met to examine the case. See ACS Papers, vol. 16, letter from Blyden to Coppinger, 7 January 1873; PBFM, vol. iii (New Series) 1874, page 25.

4. See E.W. Blyden, "Mixed Races in Liberia", in Smithsonian Institute Annual Report, Washington D.C., 1870, pp. 386ff.

influence he was able to concentrate on the theoretical aspects of his pan-Negro ideal and to travel widely, to gain support for his ideas. In Sierra Leone, just as easily as in Liberia, he was able to pursue his studies of Islam, of the Muslims in the interior, and to produce a stream of papers and books in vindication of the Negro-race.

The events in Liberia had compelled him to seek new outlets for his talents. In July that year the CMS engaged him as a linguist. The society's Minutes record the fact that he had been satisfactorily interviewed in London, and that the American Presbyterian Mission in Liberia to which he had hitherto been attached was prepared to release him for work with the CMS. After recognising his competence in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and several modern European languages the Minute notes,

> '... that he had given much attention to the Mahomedan controversy and that his great desire was to train a few Native Teachers in Arabic who might labour among the Mahomedans in the interior of Africa...'[1].

In a series of letters to Henry Venn, the Secretary of CMS, Blyden recorded his progress. He wrote from Freetown.

> '...I shall look forward to the interior and strive to establish Christian schools in the great Mohammedan centres. My aim will be to give the boys a practical knowledge of Arabic, i.e., such a knowledge as will enable them to converse in the language and read readily the Arabic Scriptures...'[2].

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1. Given in P.E.H. Hair, "E.W. Blyden and the C.M.S.: Freetown 1871-2", in The Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion, vol. 4, No. 1, 1962, page 22.

2. Blyden to Venn, 24 August 1871.

> '... The fact is that the Missionaries here, excepting such men as Bishops Vidal and Bowen and Mr. Reichardt, have been accustomed to look with contempt upon the Mohammedans...'[1].

Then Blyden turns to the incident of his expulsion from Liberia, and the charge of adultery which he denied.

> '... The storm which my enemies and the enemies of Africa in Liberia wickedly raised against me has I am thankful to say dispersed. Finding that I am out of the reach of their malignity, under British protection, in a country where law and order prevail, they have abandoned their offensive measures...'[2].

By the time Blyden wrote to Venn on 18 October 1871 it is clear that the C.M.S. in London were having second thoughts about Blyden's appointment. At the same time, opposition in Sierra Leone to his work was growing.

> 'I am anxious to push into the interior. I find that there is not much more sympathy here with the study of native languages or of interior enterprises than I found in Liberia... The European missionary, however ardent his zeal on behalf of 'poor benighted Africa' while in Europe, as soon as he comes into actual contact with the Negro, his ardour undergoes a sensible refrigeration.
>
> If you are obliged to separate from me, I shall feel it very much but I trust it will be the will of the Lord. Will you in that case give me a letter to the Governor recommending me for some office or appointment that will enable me to prosecute my study of native languages?[3].

By November the same year the link between Blyden and the C.M.S. had been broken. The reason is given in an extract from one of

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1. Blyden to Venn, 4 September 1871.
2. Blyden to Venn, 16 September 1871.
3. Blyden to Venn, 18 October 1871.

the Society's Minutes.

> '... Mr. Blyden did not explain to them that the outrage upon him by the mob in Monrovia was avowedly on the charge of his adultery with the wife of the President of the Republic...'
>
> '... they were unaware of the fact that Mr. Blyden had been suspended by the Presbytery of his Church six weeks before he offered himself to the Society'. Inasmuch as he was accepted "under a false conception of his position", his engagement must be considered as "virtually annulled", but he will be allowed a grant of one quarter's allowances...'[1].

Blyden's acceptance of this decision was uncomplaining. He hoped that the Society would not cut him off completely, but the decision was final, even though he continued to correspond with Venn for a time.

> 'I feel that in all you have done you have been under the guidance and suggestion of the Holy Spirit'.[2].

The events of 1871 had forced him to leave Liberia, but in Sierra Leone he was not far removed from the place of his former activities. In the Colony he became an inspiration for Negroes who opposed the Europeanization of the African in the wake of colonial administration. Blyden's opposition to the sectarian differences imposed on African Christians by the various European missionary groups became more pronounced at this time. He argued for the establishment of an independent indigenous African church - free from the denominational divisions characteristic of the European counterpart, and able to express more truly the richness of African traditions and customs.

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1. 7 November 1871; cf. Hair, op.cit., 1962, page 26.
2. Blyden to Venn, 27 December 1871; further letters are dated 6, 17 April 1872; see Hair, op.cit., 1962, page 24.

Henry Venn[1.] had long argued for the establishment of "self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating native churches".[2.] Blyden agreed. Venn's suggestions meant that European missionaries had the responsibility of establishing local cells of Christian faith and practice, of supervising the early growth, of training up local leadership, and then of withdrawing to pioneer the work elsewhere - repeating the cycle as often as opportunities presented themselves. Venn's ideas were not worked out in the field by European missionaries who tended to hold on to their position, convinced that the African was not yet ready for leadership.

A few years before Blyden left Liberia, the Report of the Select Parliamentary Committee on future British Policy in West Africa had been published.[3.] The recommendations pleased Blyden, because they called for a systematic programme of education and training designed to equip Africans to take over the responsibilities of administration and government.[4.] But shortly after this series of disappointments Blyden was appointed by the Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Arthur E. Kennedy,[5.] to travel into the hinterland on "a mission of Peace and Friend-

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1. His term as Secretary of CMS lasted from 1841-1873.

2. See supra, 95, footnote 3; cf. William Knight, Memoir of H. Venn, London, 1880, pp. 282-92, and 305-21; also J.F.A. Ajayi, "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", JHSN, no. 4, 1959, pp. 331-42.

3. In 1865.

4. See Parliamentary Papers, V, 1865, 3.

5. Governor of the Colony from 1865-1872, and one who adopted a policy of appointing qualified Africans to Government posts.

ship" to the Kings and Chiefs of the Falcoa and Sangara Country.[1.] Blyden left Freetown on 6 January 1872. The interior was of crucial importance, in his view, to the development of Negro interests. These interests would best be served by British patronage, and so he sought to provide the British government with the kind of evidence which would persuade them to extend their influence inland. After only a few days' travel he came to the Muslim settlement at Kambia. The Chief there, Almami Al-Hay reported on the political instability of the region, requesting that the British authorities should restore peace and begin educational work. This piece of intelligence Blyden was delighted to pass on to Kennedy.[2.]

Further reports came from Blyden as he continued his journey. Their purport was the same, Britain should establish a Protectorate. Education (particularly in the English language) should be started, and Christian missionaries, so much criticised by him for their work nearer the coast, should set up stations in the interior. He urged that a West African University should be set up in Sierra Leone, with courses designed by Negroes for Negroes. The Colonial Office was impressed by Blyden's reports, which had the support of the new Governor, John Pope Hennessy, who succeeded Kennedy in February 1872.[3.]

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1. Kennedy to (Lord) Kimberley (the Colonial Secretary in London) C.O. 267/315, 3 January 1872.

2. EWB, pp. 90-92.

3. Hennessy's support was encouraging to Blyden, but it did not last long enough to be decisive. Within a year Hennessy was transferred.

When he returned to Freetown Blyden began the newspaper he had planned, with the financial support of five African merchants.[1] It was called simply, The Negro, and its purpose was to serve the interests of the black race. As issue followed issue Blyden's criticisms of European influence in Africa and his espousal of the black cause, became more strident and polemical.

In January 1873 a new departure in Blyden's career began. The Governor appointed him Government Agent to the Interior. Blyden's second official expedition took him to Timbo, the capital of the Muslim Kingdom of Futa Jallon. At Kambia and Billeh, Blyden - and the Governor himself who had accompanied the expedition thus far - saw for themselves evidence of Muslim scholarship. Blyden, in particular, saw in these Arabic manuscripts and in the ancient traditions of detailed study, fresh evidence to support his conviction that the Muslim Negro enjoyed a greater measure of independence and self-respect than his Christian contemporary. Blyden arrived in Timbo on 4 February 1873 and on the following day negotiated a treaty,

> 'of perpetual peace and friendship between Alimami Ibrahima Suri, King of Futa Jallon, and his successors on one part, and the Governor of Sierra Leone and his successors on the other'.[2]

Blyden had done what he could to forge a link between the coast and the Muslim interior. But the development for which Blyden looked to the British Colonial Office did not materialise. The

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1. EWB, page 89.

2. EWB, page 98.

British were "interested", but uncommitted.[1.]

Blyden's advocacy of the Negro cause in his newspaper, and Hennessy's support for the development of the interior, led Bishop Cheetham on his return to Freetown in January 1873 to complain that the Africans there were becoming unbiddable. He believed that Blyden was the one principally responsible for whipping up anti-white sentiments in the Colony.[2.] This kind of criticism did little to help Blyden's case when he showed interest in the appointment of Director of Public Instruction in Sierra Leone. The post required its holder to inspect government schools and to supervise the process by which each institution was given a grant. Blyden applied for the post. His application was supported by the Acting Governor, Alexander Bravo. The Bishop did not agree, resorting to prayer in order to avert what he considered would be a disaster if Blyden were to be appointed. The Colonial Office could not dispute the fact that Blyden was the best-qualified candidate, but in the event took the view that his appointment might lead to civil disturbance. Blyden was not appointed. On 22 October 1873 he resigned as Government Agent to the Interior. Not long afterwards he returned to Liberia.

There he began a strong attack on Christian missions in Africa, and on Crowther's alma mater, Fourah Bay College.[3.] He

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1. Colonial Office, 267/320, no. 6209: Timbo Expedition Report.

2. CA1/025e, Cheetham to Venn, 13 March - 9 April 1873, cf. EWB, pp. 99-101.

3. But never on Crowther, whom he much admired. See infra, page 215.

became less sympathetic to his earlier Christian beliefs and more sympathetic to the religious traditions of the African peoples. Blyden did not succeed in weakening the influence of Fourah Bay as he campaigned for the establishment of a secular university. In 1876 - possibly as a riposte - the status of Fourah Bay was enhanced by its affiliation to the University of Durham. In 1873 he returned to Liberia. It was another thirteen years before he decided, in September 1886, to sever his links with institutional Christianity, to resign as a Presbyterian Minister, and to declare himself "a Minister of Truth".[1.] It is not possible to say how much that decision was influenced not only by his growing understanding of Islam, but also by the rejection he experienced personally at the hands of European Christians. In 1873 he embarked upon a new phase of his career in education and diplomacy. In both he was to use his pen to good effect.

He campaigned increasingly - and with little regard for his health or personal circumstances - on behalf of an ideal which had already assumed the status of an obsession. He travelled widely, wherever and whenever an invitation came, and everywhere his theme was the same. The cause of Negro advancement was uppermost in his mind. To that single cause he was prepared to subordinate all other considerations. The influence of his Christianity or of his understanding of Islam, was regulated by

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1. His resignation from the ministry virtually ended Presbyterian missionary influence in Liberia. In 1896 the mission withdrew from the country. See T.W. Livingston, Education and Race, San Francisco, 1975, page 213.

that larger vision.[1.] At this stage of his career Blyden's vision sought expression in two specific projects, for the implementation of which it was the money - not the ideas - which was lacking. For neither the establishment of the independent African Church, nor the secular University of West Africa were local funds sufficient. The British government was not ready to help, despite Blyden's eloquent advocacy. Yet the force of his arguments was not denied.

> '...the ethnocentrism which Blyden inspired is significant as marking the first major revolt in West Africa against western cultural dominance, and the beginning of cultural nationalism - the most characteristic form of African assertion in the nineteenth century".[2.]

During the remaining years of the nineteenth century he travelled extensively, visiting the United States and Europe on several occasions. His links with institutional Christianity became more tenuous, his alienation from expatriate mission work in West Africa became more acute and his association with Muslims and defence of Islam became more pronounced. From 1873 to 1885 he held a number of posts with varying success. He spent two years from 1875 to 1877, as principal of Alexander High School, where he had earlier studied to be a teacher and a

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1. Although his critics frequently alleged it, he never became a Muslim. cf. The Rev. A.L. Ridgel writing in VOM, March 1896,
   "Dr. Blyden is a strange man. He has no country, no interest and no future. He exchanged Christ for Mahomet. He laid down the Bible for the Koran. He was driven out of Liberian politics by the wild imprecations of the populace. He is an old man. His life and history is only notable because of his desertion of Christianity. Can you follow a man who has denied Christ?" Ridgel was a fellow Negro, who spent many years as a missionary on the West Coast of Africa.

2. EWB, page 104.

Presbyterian minister. From August 1877 to December 1878 he was Liberia's first Minister to Great Britain, appointed by President James S. Payne.[1] to the Court of St. James. From 1880 to 1884 he was president of Liberia College. In addition, for the first two years of this period, he was a Cabinet Minister, responsible for the Interior, and Secretary for Education. In 1885 he was defeated in the Presidential election.

His tenure of each of these appointments was controversial. He was impatient of criticism particularly when it came from individuals for whose lack of experience and knowledge he had only disdain. He moved Alexander High School inland to Harrisburg on the St. Paul's river. Two reasons can be given for this. First, the capital, Monrovia, contained many individuals who were opposed to Blyden's ideas. Second, Blyden saw in the re-opening of the college[2] an expression of his conviction that the future of the country lay with the opening up, and development, of the interior. His time as principal included a great deal of teaching. He taught craft subjects, agriculture, and Arabic. He gave time to visiting Muslim communities, mosques and schools, to gain a more intimate knowledge of Islam.

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1. cf. PBFM, vol. v (New Series), 1878, page 27, "... (Blyden has) entered into engagements requiring much of his time, and rendering it expedient, in his judgement, that he should not be connected with a missionary board; his declared purpose is still to devote attention to the education of the Liberia (**sic**) people".

2. It had been closed down when Blyden was appointed Professor of Classics at Liberia College in 1861. See PBFM, vol. xvii, 1863, page 15, and ibid, 1864, pp. 14-15.

During his period as Liberia's diplomatic representative in London, he sought to bring about an agreement about the disputed boundary between Liberia and Sierra Leone.[1] He hoped to persuade Britain to take a more active interest in the administration of the interior zones, and to attract British capital and management for the construction of a rail-link between Monrovia and the interior. In addition to this he pressed for the establishment of a viable coffee-growing industry. In all of these enterprises, except the last, he had no success. But where he failed as a diplomat, he succeeded brilliantly at a personal level. He was already known as a black savant. The influential quarterly, Fraser's Magazine, published four articles between 1875 and 1876, dealing with his attitudes to Islam and to Christianity.[2] London hostesses competed to invite him to their dinners and discussions. He was entertained by the leading politicians and churchmen of the day.[3] The Athenaeum and the St. George's extended honorary membership.

All his exploits and achievements as a Negro lion in London society were faithfully, and even ecstatically, recorded by the press in West Africa. Here was a black man who had stormed the fortress of European privilege.[4] He was held up as an example to others of his race. Yet this labourer was not,

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1. EWB, page 175.
2. See infra, pp. 224 ff.
3. EWB, page 174.
4. West African Reporter, issue of 19 December 1877.

apparently, worthy of his hire. He drew no salary as a diplomat. He relied on the generosity of English friends, and of the American Quaker, E.S. Morris, who, for a time, acted as his secretary, accompanying him to various engagements in London. The first phase of Blyden's diplomatic career lasted only a few months, but this short period enhanced his reputation in Liberia. In January 1880 the board of Trustees offered him the presidency of Liberia College. He accepted the appointment but did not make a success of the job. Once again it proved that he was an idealist with a vision, but not the dedication and painstaking capacity for detailed administration.[1.] He spent too much time away from the College, visiting the United States on several occasions to speak about his pan-Negro ideal for Africa. He aroused the anger of Liberian mulattoes for his black racism. He offended colleagues who did not share his vision, his drive, and his intellectual gifts. He took on too many different tasks at the same time, thus dissipating his energy and alienating his associates. This inability to settle down to a specific task was noted by friends and enemies, causing him to write,

> 'My restlessness and my apparent fickleness is largely due to this. I am persecuted outside (sic) but more inside. Uncongenial, incompatible, my wife makes the burden of my life sore and heavy'.[2.]

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1. SLB, page 7.

2. PBFM Papers, vol. 10, letter to Lowrie, 15 January 1875. Blyden's marriage, to a mulatto woman, is referred to supra, page 189, footnote 1.

At the same time he was offered the post at Liberia College, he was invited to serve as Minister of the Interior, and as Secretary for Education in President Gardner's administration. He accepted this second offer as well, and in so doing over-committed his time and talents. He seems to have been unable to resist the lure and the challenge of high office. But the division of his interests and responsibilities afforded his critics further grounds for dissatisfaction. The College was in a poor state. He had to build it up, and to try to make of it a reputable academic institution - based upon his vision of the educated Negro. He was installed as President of the College on 5 February 1881.[1.] Blyden wanted the College to become an institution, renowned throughout West Africa, and far beyond, for its defence of Negro ideals, and for the excellence of its education. To be this, the College had to oppose the influence of European thought and practice. Negroes were not to become imitators of Whites.

> 'The African must advance by methods of his own. He must possess a power distinct from that of the European'.[2.]

Blyden's dream was not realised. The reasons for this were his inability to settle down to a long period of meticulous administration and his unwillingness to effect compromise with colleagues and associates, whose efforts he tactlessly criticised as pedantic. As he grew older he was becoming more impatient with

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1. His inaugural address, "The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans", is included in CINR, pp. 71-93.

2. ibid, page 77.

critics. As his impatience grew, so did his influence wane.[1.]

As Minister of the Interior, Blyden was obliged to spend time away from the College, but he was forced to resign his political appointment for another reason. The problem of Liberia's north-western boundary had still not been settled. The British authorities took a hand, sending four gun-boats to Monrovia in March 1882. The British had apparently decided to annex the disputed area for Sierra Leone. This show of strength impressed Gardner, who had been re-elected President in 1881. He and his colleagues agreed that Liberia should relinquish any territorial claims, west of the Marfur river. The Senate refused to accept this decision. Feelings ran high in the country. Blyden was held responsible, and he was forced to resign. He was nothing if not resilient. At first he sought refuge from the clamour in Cape Palmas, where he found congenial company, no influential mulattoes, and a natural acceptance of African values.[2.]

Just over a month later he left on another visit to the United States. In New York, Boston, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia, he outlined his plans for the development of Liberia College. He interviewed prospective Negro students, advised in three professorial appointments, saw the appointment of Jennie E. Davis as head of a newly-created department for women. At the same time he went round the country solicit-

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1. SLB, page 7; EWB, pp. 150-154, 156.

2. ACS Papers, vol. 20, letter from Blyden to Coppinger, 26 April 1882.

ing funds for the College. His visit was successful. He went back to Monrovia, arriving on 3 June 1883, with the promise of new students, new teachers, and financial support.

The promise was not fulfilled. Blyden found himself isolated yet again. The new professors[1.] were immediately disaffected, refused to teach, and recommended to the American Trustees that the College be closed down. In January 1884 Blyden faced the Liberian Trustees. He left the College and once more retired to Sierra Leone.[2.] In 1885 he campaigned for the presidency. He was nominated by the Republican party, whose leaders were the very mulattoes he despised. His bid for political office was defeated, and H.W. Johnson was re-elected. He still wanted to serve his country in some capacity, but he lacked the guile which success in politics seems to require.[3.]

It was his last venture into politics. In October 1886 he re-visited Monrovia, where the civic welcome given to him was construed by Johnson as a direct encouragement of Blyden to stand against him in the next presidential election.[4.] Once

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1. H.M. Browne (Intellectual and Moral Philosophy), and T.M. Stewart (History and Law). Both were mulattoes.

2. After a lengthy absence from the College, he was suspended by the Trustees on 8 June 1884, after which he resigned.

3. EWB, page 163.

4. ACS Papers, vol. 23, no. 105, "Resolutions of Appreciation and Welcome Passed by the Common Council of Monrovia, 25 October 1886, to Hon. E.W. Blyden, LL.D".

again Blyden went away to Cape Palmas, and thence back to Sierra Leone.

Blyden was now without an official position. He was a freelance agent, earning what he could from lectures and authorship. He was still able to count on a measure of financial support from his friends, both black and white, but his position was increasingly insecure. Although his personal standing in Liberia was controversial, he was still useful to the Republic in a number of ways, as a representative and apologist abroad. From this point in his career he spent much time in Sierra Leone and Lagos, but from time to time he served as a diplomat. He was the Liberian minister to Britain in 1892, for five months.[1.] In 1905 he spent a further five months in a similar capacity in Britain and France. His diplomatic activity consisted of attempts to ensure that in the European scramble for Africa, Liberia did not fall into colonial dependency. In this he was successful, but he was unable to prevent Britain and France from seizing parts of Liberian territory and adding them to Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast respectively.[2.]

Blyden's major work, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, was published in 1887, and soon received critical acclaim. The failure of his political career re-awakened his interest in the future of African scholarship. Liberia College had not enjoyed

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1. In a letter, dated 1 May 1893, and published in VOM, July 1893, Bishop Turner of A.M.E. reports a meeting with Dr. Blyden in Sierra Leone. Blyden is described as waiting for instructions to proceed again to England, as "Minister resident". He is "one of the few men who never make a vapid remark".

2. H.H. Johnston, Liberia, vol. 1, London, 1906, pp. 300-1.

success since his departure in 1884. In 1893 the Liberian legislature passed an Act which took the College out of the control of the American Trustees. The College was financed locally, and began a new phase as an independent institution.[1.] It was re-opened on 21 February 1900. For the next fourteen months, Blyden was a professor at the College, but in March 1901 he finally ended his connection with the place because by that time it was clear that his colleagues did not share his vision of the way in which the College should develop. He had made his ideas public on several occasions, not least when he delivered the inaugural address on the re-opening of the College. He called for courses which would revolutionize the ideas which Liberians had of themselves, of other Africans, as well as of the expatriates with whom they came in contact.[2.] The rest of the staff advocated a more conventional approach to the curriculum. When Blyden assumed the duties of College President, in January 1901, matters soon came to a head. He was accused of teaching students,

> 'the principles of Mohammedanism and polygamy'[3.] Annoyed that his staff only wished to have the conventional subjects taught, Blyden impetuously quitted the College in March 1901, and a few months later took up the position of Director of Muslim Education in Sierra Leone'.[4.]

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1. L.R. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, vol. 2, section 16: "The Liberian Republic", New York, 1928, page 754.

2. Liberia Bulletin, no. 17, November 1900, page 14.

3. ACS Papers, vol. 28, 18 June 1901.

4. EWB, page 169.

During his time in Freetown Blyden lost no opportunity to use his pen in defence of the pan-Negro ideal. He worked on articles for the Sierra Leone Weekly News, and the Lagos Weekly Record. For three months, from December 1890 to February 1891, Blyden had been involved in an increasingly bitter controversy in Lagos. It was in this Nigerian centre of African culture - so much influenced by traditional religion and by Islam - that Blyden's idea of an independent African Church began to be a reality.[1.]

At this point in his career, Blyden, a long-time admirer of Crowther, became involved in the latter's final struggle for the principle of African leadership in the Niger Mission. The Sudan Party, an enthusiastic group of evangelical missionaries, led by G.W. Brooke and J.A. Robinson, had been outspokenly critical of Crowther's leadership. They condemned the work that had been done, berated the Africans for their laxity and lack of zeal, and insisted that control of mission policy should be in the hands of Europeans.[2.] Africans were incensed by the insult directed against their most distinguished churchman, who was very much enfeebled by age. This was the situation when a group of fourteen Africans invited Blyden to come to Lagos, to support them in what they considered to be a campaign against white domination.[3.]

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1. J.B. Webster, African Churches among the Yorubas, 1888-1922, London, 1964, pp. 65-66.

2. See supra, pp. 111-113; J.B. Webster op.cit., pp. 17-18; J.F.A. Ajayi, CMN, page 253.

3. Lagos Weekly Times, 19 July 1890.

Blyden received a public welcome when he arrived by sea in Lagos on 20 December 1890. His dazzling intellectual achievements assured him of a ready hearing. The particular circumstances of this visit raised the emotions of his hosts to the point of adulation. The following piece of plagiarism was evidence of the regard in which he was held by Negroes.

> 'Africa's destiny lay hid in night,
> God said, 'Let Blyden be', and all
> was light'.[1.]

Blyden used the occasion to press for the setting up of an African church, based in Lagos. On 2 January 1891 he addressed a crowded meeting in the C.M.S., Breadfruit School House. He urged that Crowther be appointed as leader of the new church, adding,

> 'Bishop Crowther must always stand first in the history of any Native Church, whatever form it may take. The name must ever be honourably identified with the history of West African Christianity'.[2.]

In seeking to re-impose white control of the mission by replacing African Christians with Europeans, C.M.S. had bitterly offended local opinion. Although Africans were, to some extent, re-instated, it happened that no formal apology was ever made to Crowther himself. Within a few months, Crowther was dead. He died on New Year's Eve, 1891. Blyden's passionate advocacy of independence found some temporary local support, but in the long term the Anglican elements remained in close contact with Canterbury.[3.] On this visit (as on his

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1. ibid, 27 December 1890.
2. Quoted in EWB, page 224.
3. ibid, pp. 225-233.

subsequent visit)[1]. to Lagos, Blyden was disappointed at the outcome. He could not persuade his hearers to bring about the institutional changes. He only succeeded in securing their enthusiastic acclamation of his rhetoric.[2]. One of the reasons for this may have been his attitude to Islam. He seemed to be arguing that Islam, and not Christianity, was best suited to African needs.

Blyden's long interest in Islam, his disaffection with Christianity - at least in its European dress - and his withdrawal from a recognisable church affiliation, combined to offend many of his hearers. As director of Muslim education in Sierra Leone[3]. he had noted the remarkable spread of Islam in West Africa during his own life-time. He had come to see Islam as a religion which brought together different peoples into a community with common aims. He had seen for himself evidence of scholarship and learning among Muslims. He wanted to use the unifying force of Islam to further his pan-Negro ideal. Unlike many of his contemporaries he was respected and trusted by Muslims.

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1. 17 April to 15 July 1894.

2. Clerical opposition to Blyden's suggestions did not prevent a small group of laymen taking an initiative. In August 1891 they formed the United Native African Church, with the Methodist Episcopalian Minister, C.W. Cole as President, and the businessman W.E. Cole as Secretary; cf. W.O. Ajayi, HNM, pp. 530-542.

3. 1901 - 1906.

During the course of his second visit to Lagos,[1] the primary purpose of which was to attend the opening of the new mosque, he paid more attention to the education of Muslim youth. He had already begun this privately in Freetown a few years earlier. Later on, in 1896 to 1897 he was appointed Agent for Native Affairs in Lagos, opening a government school in that city so that English and "western subjects" could be taught to Muslims. None of this activity endeared him to more conservative Christians, either white or black.[2] In Blyden's view, Lagos was the place where his views about cultural nationalism and "African Personality"[3] could find fuller expression. This vibrant community, once more a separate colony since 1886,[4] provided the kind of stimulus to Blyden which was lacking in Freetown. Lagos was, by this time, the most advanced British colony in West Africa, and it was this fact which gave Blyden so much encouragement as he sought to encourage the people there to seize the opportunities they had to further his ideals. But even in Lagos, dissension and opposition made co-operation between different groups difficult. Lagos was not to be the locus for the realisation of Blyden's dream,[5] but he was not altogether deterred.

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1. April - July 1894; in a letter to the editor of VOM, the Rev. A.L. Ridgel, who was with Blyden at the opening of the mosque, noted the earnestness of the Muslims present. He records that Blyden commented, "You never see such devotion among Christians". VOM, January 1894.

2. EWB, pp. 227-28.

3. Sierra Leone Times, 27 May 1893.

4. Under the Governor, Alfred Moloney.

5. EWB, pp. 229-30.

As Agent for Native Affairs in Lagos, from 9 March 1896, Blyden continued to campaign for two projects. The first, already mentioned, was the scheme to open a school for Muslim youth. Even here there was opposition from Muslims who were suspicious of Blyden's motives, and who feared that the kind of education to be offered would westernize and secularize their children. Blyden had to re-assure them that this was not the intention. After lengthy consultation, the school opened on 15 June. When he left Lagos at the end of 1897, the school was well-established.

> '"English education" for Muslim children was no longer a novelty: the success of the Lagos School had led to requests for the establishment of similar schools at Epe, Ibadan and Badagry'[1].

The second project for which Blyden campaigned was concerned with the setting up of an Institute of Higher Education in Lagos for West Africans. To begin with, there was considerable enthusiasm for the proposal but this initial support began to disappear as the practical problems of administration and finance became clearer. At the beginning, Blyden had the support of the British Governor, Carter, but ill-health - combined with the discouraging advice of his superiors in London - made it impossible for Carter to convert his support for the project in principle, to a programme of action. Carter had to retire in October 1896.[2] His successor, H.E. McCallum was not co-operative, and Blyden resigned from his

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1. ibid, page 236; for further reference to this point, see infra, page 219. See also T.G.O. Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908, Longman, 1978, pp. 164-176. On Blyden's attitude to Muslim Education, see T.W. Livingston, op.cit., pp. 160-183.

2. Colonial Office 147/107, letter from Blyden to Carter, dated 10 November 1896.

post at the end of 1897.

It became one of Blyden's major goals to overcome the conservative suspicion of West African Muslims for any system of education which went beyond the traditional pattern of Islamic practice. But he was unwilling to be deflected from his purpose by the objections which were raised. The force of his personality and the skill of his advocacy enabled him to start again in Sierra Leone when circumstances drove him from Lagos. Between 1901 and 1906 he served as "Director of Mohammedan Education" in the Colony. During this period he strove to improve relationships between members of different religious communities, especially between Muslims and those whose education was increasingly influenced by the English language.[1.]

In February 1906 the government of Sierra Leone established a school at Bo.[2.] Blyden had been campaigning for such an experiment for years. From the outset the school was intended to be non-sectarian. The curriculum recognised the importance of academic subjects, without ignoring the value of technical training. Both aspects of education, allied to ethical training, were designed to prepare Africans to become local leaders in their own communities. Blyden encouraged the pupils to retain their African dress, customs and music. He was not pleased when he heard that the first

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1. Even now he was unable to devote all his time to the task. From June to September in 1905, he was Liberian Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to London and Paris.

2. F.H. Hilliard, A Short History of Education in British West Africa, London, 1957, page 25.

Principal was to be a European C.M.S. missionary called Proudfoot.

> 'The Mohammedans ... are opposed to the School being under a Christian missionary of which the intelligence spreading into the interior has produced the impression that the policy of the Government is to force the people to become Christians, an impression most damaging to British influence and prestige. The direction in which the Governor Probyn is setting his face in contravention of native ideas is no thoroughfare. Of course, he has it in his power to force his way, but at the end of his journey he will come to a swamp full of dead men's bones'.[1.]

Blyden was in a position to see that his political influence was beginning to wane by this time, although his pen had lost nothing of its polemical power, as this extract shows. This loss of influence owed something to his advancing age, but this was not the crucial factor. He had become a cult figure. The young men of Bo founded the Blyden Club on 26 December 1907. Its aim was to develop what Blyden had already called "the African Personality". His own name passed into the jargon of Club membership. Members were exhorted to be "Blydenic", and to act "Blydenically".[2.] Yet even at this high point of personal prestige, Blyden's reputation was beginning to suffer. It was the younger generation of West Africans, a generation whose independence of thought Blyden had striven to encourage, which became critical of his ideas. Blyden himself stood as a shining example of what the Negro could achieve in the white man's world. Yet Blyden continued to advise them to

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1. Blyden to R.L. Antrobus (Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office). Letter dated 10 March 1906, Colonial Office 267/491, given in SLB, page 480.

2. Sierra Leone Weekly News, xxv, 14 November 1908. To think, and act, 'Blydenically', meant to accept Blyden's race theory, and to strive for Negro cultural independence. Another term used for this was, 'Ethiopianism", but on this point, see F.B. Welborn, 'A Note on Types of Religious Society', in CTA, pp. 131-138.

develop their own culture and to resist European cultural assimilation. He told them to retain African dress, music and customs, but conducted his own life as if western norms were superior. He advocated political and cultural independence within the framework of a narrow West African provincialism, urging that it was not yet time to throw off the yoke of British administration. The young saw inconsistency in this. They were learning to value their own history, but not at the expense of the solid improvements to their position which western experience and skill could bring. In addition to this they were unwilling to rest easy when the greatest prizes of all - national identity and political independence - were not yet won.[1.]

Blyden withdrew from the struggle. He was not only old, but poor. He was also in poor health. He did not permit himself any modification in the principles which he had represented from the beginning on the question of Negro development, but he was now being regarded for what he had done rather than for what he might still do. Followers such as Samuel Lewis, T.J. Sawyerr and Moses Blyle died. Disciples such as Majola Agbebi and J.E. Casely Hayford offered some financial support in his old age. In 1909 Blyden was in the Royal Southern Hospital in Liverpool for a knee operation. He was there for fifteen weeks. He addressed a poignant appeal to his former Colonial Office contact, Richard Antrobus, explaining his straitened circumstances.

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1. EWB, pp. 242-243.

> 'My expenses of fifteen weeks in the hospital have left me in debt; and the Liberians, men whom I have taught and in other ways have assisted, seem to have no idea of restoring my pension. History repeats itself. The people kill the prophets. Cicero, Demosthenes, Socrates, must go if the unprincipled demagogue so wills.
>
> I therefore respectfully repeat the request made in my last that H.M.'s Government grant me an allowance of £50 or 100 per year. This would help me and help the situation in various ways. It would enable me to pay my rent and get more than one meal a day and restore my prestige in the eyes of the people. The death of Sir Alfred Jones[1]. has been a great loss to me'.[2].

Antrobus did not forget his old correspondent. He approached the Colonial Secretary who secured the passage of legislation in Sierra Leone, Lagos and the Gold Coast for the provision of an annual pension from each colony of £25 for Blyden. The pension was paid for only two years. On 7 February 1912 Blyden died at home in Freetown. His funeral service was conducted by a Christian minister, the Rev. J.R. Frederick, a personal friend. But Muslims as well as Christians were in attendance, and it was

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1. A Liverpool entrepreneur and ship-owner, with interests in West African trade.

2. Blyden to Antrobus, Colonial Office 267/528, 16 January 1910, given in SLB, page 500. Further details about his insolvency are given in letters to various benefactors, notably John Holt, the entrepreneur. There are letters to Holt, dated 6 August 1903, 17 July 1908, 20 July 1908, 26 August 1909, in JHP, Box 12, file 4; See also infra, Appendix A, page 388.

a small group of Muslim men who carried his coffin to the grave. He died, almost alone, and at the end he was embittered by the opposition to his ideas. He had been a man of two cultures. Intellectually, he was drawn into the traditions of white European culture. Emotionally, he identified with Negro aspirations. This dual allegiance made his life difficult and frequently irksome. He lived, and died, a solitary but far from selfish life.

6. Blyden's Attitude to Islam.

(a) Islam and Race Distinctions.

In an essay with this title[1]. Blyden turned to his main theme of race. The first point of his argument is made with characteristic vigour. Christianity may be spread more widely throughout the world than either Islam or Buddhism but, unlike Islam, it has remained the religion of the Aryan race.

> 'If the divinity of a religion may be inferred from the variety of races among whom it has been diffused, and the strength of its hold upon them, then there is no religion that can prefer greater claims than Islam. Of the three missionary religions - we adopt the classification of Max Muller[2]. - none has in so marked a degree overstepped the limits of race as the religion of Mohammed'.[3].

For all its humble origins, Christianity had become the handmaid of western culture, whose missionary representatives had not been able to put aside their feelings of racial superiority.[4]. This was not the case with Islam, according to Blyden's analysis.

Blyden cites several examples of Negro Muslims who have risen to positions of power in Muslim communities, but not enough to carry the weight of his claim that the history of Islam is pre-

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1. Fraser's Magazine, November 1876; CINR, pp. 241-259.
2. F. Max Müller, "Lecture on Missions", given on 3 December 1873, in Westminster Abbey.
3. CINR, page 241.
4. ibid, page 244.

ferable to that of Christianity in this respect.[1.] Blyden emphasises that in drawing attention to these matters he is not,

> '... instituting a comparison between the two systems of religion, but only between the methods and proceedings of their respective professors and propagators'.[2.]

This is a characteristic feature of his attitude. For him the operative words in the Gospel are, "You shall know them by their fruits".[3.] He states that after eighteen hundred years of the religion of Jesus, Christianity nowhere furnishes evidence of a capacity to adapt to the needs of the different races of the world which compares with the record of Islam. Recalling some words of Bosworth Smith he adds,

> 'Christianity is not to blame for this, but Christian nations are'.[4.]

Commenting on the policy of separate development and non-integration imposed by white Americans on Negroes and Indians in their country - he quotes a paragraph from an influential Protestant journal,

> '... The great error we commit toward the Indian is failing to recognize in him that common humanity which should lead us to call all men brothers and citizens. They are men and women like ourselves; they have the same hearts to touch by kindness and warm by friendship, and the same love for home that is common to all mankind, in a greater or less degree'.[5.]

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1. ibid, page 245.
2. ibid, page 246, footnote 10.
3. St. Matthew, vii, 16.
4. Quoted in CINR, page 246.
5. Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review, January 1876; CINR, page 247.

This does, indeed, provide him with an opportunity to make a comparison based on "the methods and proceedings" of Christians and Muslims.

> 'We venture to express the belief that no such appeal would have been necessary had that interesting race of men been in contact with thirty millions of Mohammedans, instead of thirty millions of Christians. The wars fought against them would have been wars not of extermination but of proselytising. They would have been repetitions, probably in their manner, but certainly in their results, of the Syrian wars of Omar and Ali, the African wars of Amru and Akbar, and the Spanish wars of Musa and Tarik. The millions who were found on the continent would now be alive in their descendants, and absorbed in the national life'.[1.]

In the course of his essay Blyden takes up another important theme, with his white European and American readers particularly in mind. In other essays he has commended the new spirit of objective enquiry which has become a feature of the works on the subject of Islam by European scholars.[2.] Here he draws attention to the deficiencies of another type of book about Islam written by a European. Blyden consistently pleaded for fairness and balance. His attitude to Islam epitomises this. It was all the more lamentable, therefore, for him to see the appearance of a book such as the one he now had before him. The book in question was by Major R.D. Osborn of the Bengal Staff Corps.[3.] Osborn's intentions were honourable in Blyden's view, but the book did less

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1. CINR, page 247.

2. Apart from his admiration of Bosworth Smith's work, infra, pp. 231 ff. Blyden calls attention to the work of Sprenger, Muir, Deutsch and Nöldeke on several occasions, e.g. CINR, pp. 2-3, 249.

3. R.D. Osborn, Islam under the Arabs, London, 1876.

than justice to its subject. From his experience in India Osborn claims to have set himself the task - incumbent upon a servant of Empire - to familiarize himself with the customs and beliefs of those he has been sent to rule. His book is intended to be the means of transmitting his experience and knowledge to fellow-countrymen who share with him the burden of Empire. Though Blyden finds this attitude patronising, he reserves his criticism for the contents of Osborn's book. Osborn,

> 'repeats, with the credulity and confidence of those who have gathered their information mainly from Gibbon and Prideaux, the opinions entertained of Islam in the Middle Ages'.[1.]

Blyden is at pains to correct the kind of European attitude to Islam, which Osborn's presentation reflects. He summarises Osborn's understanding of Islam like this.

> 'Its creed is a bald monotheism, absolute and unchanging decrees, introduced by a prophet who felt it to be his Divine mission to exterminate all professors of a religion different from his; a Hell of material fire depicted with Dantesque realism; a Heaven of sensual indulgences and delights. The ideal man of Islam - the saint of the religion - is he who can say, 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet', and who for this creed is ready to sacrifice relatives, friends, country - even life itself. He may be ignorant, treacherous, cruel, sensual, anything, so far as character is concerned, and yet look forward to the highest reward of the faithful. Any and every true and noble element of manhood may be left out, and yet, if faithful to his creed and system, the beautiful houris await him in his paradise above'.[2.]

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1. CINR, page 249.

2. ibid, pp. 249-250.

This is the over-simplification which Blyden deduces from Osborn, and in which he sees a misrepresentation of the reality. It is because of such misrepresentation that Christians continue to labour under ignorance of the facts. The book is 'a retrogression in Oriental literature'.[1.]

Blyden instances three of the major misrepresentations of Islam which occur in Osborn's book. First, Osborn asserts that the central tenet of Islam is fatalism, that this is rooted in the Qur'ānic conception of God, and that this belief "has been burned indelibly" into the Muslim mind.[2.] Employing Rodwell's English translation of the Qur'ān, which was also used by Osborn, Blyden sets out to show that Islam teaches the opposite of what Osborn states.

> 'Whoever shall turn him to God after his wickedness, and amend, God truly will be turned to him; for God is 'forgiving and merciful''.[3.]
>
> 'Your Lord hath laid down for Himself a law of mercy; so that if any one of you commit a fault through ignorance, and afterwards turn and amend, He will surely be gracious, merciful'.[4.]

Second, Blyden deals with Osborn's estimate of Muhammad - of which the following is typical.

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1. Blyden contrasts this work with that of Bosworth Smith later in the essay, ibid, page 256, preferring the latter because it takes a less biased view of the data.

2. CINR, page 250.

3. Qur'ān 5 [42].

4. ibid, 6 [54].

> 'At Medina, the religious teacher is superseded by the ambitious politician, and the idols of the Kaaba fall before the mandate of the successful chieftain, not under the transforming influences of a spiritual regenerator. To achieve worldly dominion, he has recourse to assassination; he perpetrates massacre; he makes a Heathen superstition the keystone of his faith; and delivers to his followers, as a revelation from God, a mandate of universal War. With every advance in worldly power he disencumbers himself of that spiritual humility which was a part of his earlier faith. He associates himself with God on a footing approaching to equality'.[1].

Blyden seizes on the last sentence, refusing to accept that anyone of Osborn's experience could be so ignorant of the facts and so insensitive to the shocking impact of such an idea on Muslims. He answers this impiety with some words attributed to Muhammad himself.

> 'I am no more than a man; when I order you anything respecting religion receive it; and when I order you about the affairs of this world, then I am nothing more than a man'.[2].

Third, Blyden considers Osborn's concept of jihād. He begins by selecting some key passages from the latter's book.

> 'The one common duty laid upon the faithful is to be the agents of God's vengeance on those who believe not. These are to be slaughtered till they pay tribute, when they are to be allowed to go to hell in their own way without further molestation.... The Mohammedan still conceives himself to be the elect of God. He regards not with compassion - that word is too humane - but with contempt unspeakable, as 'logs' reserved for 'hell fire', the votaries of all other creeds. Wherever he has the power, he holds it to be his mission to trample upon and persecute them.
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> The ninth sura is that which contains the Prophet's proclamation of war against the votaries of all creeds other than of Islam'.[3].

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1. Osborn, op.cit., page 91.

2. CINR, page 252.

3. ibid, pp. 252-253.

Blyden turns to the ninth sūrah of the Qur'ān to find a coherent set of revelations which exhorts Muslims to be much more tolerant than Osborn will admit. The ninth sūrah "contains no such proclamation"[1] as the one to which Osborn refers.[2]

> 'Those against whom war is declared in that chapter are described in the original as Mushrikun - a term in which the radical idea is that of association - the associating one thing with another... The surah is addressed to Arabs who believed in and worshipped only the true God, and refers to the treatment to be accorded by them to those Arabs who joined the worship of idols with that of the true God'.[3]

Blyden criticises Osborn for failing to understand this sūrah, and for presenting a false picture of Islam to his readers.

> 'Nowhere in the Koran are Muslims enjoined to make indiscriminate war upon Christians or Jews. On the contrary, there are numerous passages that inculcate an enlightened tolerance, which writers of the temper of Major Osborn would do well to emulate'.[4]

Still using Rodwell's English translation of the Qur'an, Blyden quotes several passages in which tolerance - particularly for 'people of the Book', ahl al-kitāb (i.e. including Jews and Christians), is enjoined. Blyden was in the habit of emphasising the non-racial character of Islam.

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1. ibid, page 253.
2. For further reference to Blyden's treatment of sūrah 9 in this context, see infra, pp. 364-370.
3. ibid, page 253.
4. ibid, page 253.

In an extended review article[1.] of Bosworth Smith's book Mohammed and Mohammedanism,[2.] Blyden sets out his views on the efficacy of Islam to eradicate racial discrimination. It was a theme to which he returned on many occasions. The fact that human beings are divided into races with differing characteristics, achievements, failings and aspirations was never disputed by Blyden. Instead of denying the basis of racial theory he endeavoured to interpret the data in a different way. The history of the relationship between Negroes and Aryans had, in Blyden's view furnished abundant evidence that contemporary white interpretations of racial distinctions were founded at best on misunderstanding and at worst on flagrant self-interest. No racial group was inferior to another. None could claim superiority. The races of mankind were indisputably different, "distinct but equal".[3.] The real question for Blyden was how to decide between Christianity and Islam as the religion best suited to the needs of Negroes - whether they were in Africa or anywhere else.

Thus there are two aspects of Blyden's work which are brought together in his attitude to Islam (and also, for reasons of comparison, his attitude to Christianity). First there is his vigorous defence of the proposition that racial theory, interpreted in relation to Negroes and Whites, is the starting point for recognising

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1. "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race", Fraser's Magazine, London, November, 1975; reprinted in CINR, pp. 1-24.

2. R. Bosworth Smith, London, 1874; Blyden became a friend of Smith. In 1876 Blyden spent some time with Smith at the latter's house at Harrow.

3. CINR, page 277.

the potential in all men irrespective of colour, given that all are equally children of God.

This involved a careful investigation of the evidence to show that with comparable degrees of personal freedom Negroes could match the intellectual achievements of their oppressors. The most potent and compelling weapon in his arsenal, one that he did not fail to use consciously, was his own intellectual achievement.

The second aspect of his work is his capacity to approach the whole question of religion in a pragmatic manner, applying what amounts to a strictly utilitarian calculus, in order to differentiate between the actions of adherents of different religious systems, as those actions affected the needs of members of his own race. In Bosworth Smith's book he found opinions expressed which were congenial to his present temper, not least that Christians could benefit from a more sympathetic study of the claims of Islam, and of the actions of Muslims.[1.]

This was not an idea calculated to endear Blyden to Christian missionaries of the time, or to their supporters at home. In Blyden's view, Bosworth Smith adopts an exemplary attitude to Islam, in that he sets aside prejudice and proceeds to investigate the practical features of Islam as objectively as possible, in order to present "a clear, unbiased, and unambiguous verdict, the influ-

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1. ibid, page 2.

ence of which, whether acknowledged or not, must be felt throughout the literary world".[1.] The ignorance of Islam in the western world will, to some extent, be lessened (Blyden supposes) by books such as the one under review, but his standards are set still higher. Arabic is the key to an understanding of Islam, that is, of what Islam means to Muslims.[2.]

> 'The Koran is, in its measure, an important educator. It exerts among a primitive people a wonderful influence. It has furnished to the adherents of its teachings in Africa a ground of union which has contributed vastly to their progress. Hausas, Foulahs, Mandingoes, Soosoos, Akus, can all read the same books and mingle in worship together, and there is to all one common authority and one ultimate umpirage. They are united by a common religious sentiment, by a common antagonism to Paganism.[3.]

In Africa Islam has assumed the status of a crusade, involving individual Muslims in a life of proselytism. Blyden draws some conclusions from the manner in which Muslims discharge this obligation to present the faith to non-Muslims, and comments on their success in West Africa.[4.] The Islamic opposition to paganism provides a common focus for members of historically alienated tribal groups. Islam is a unifying force, uniting Muslims internally as they practise obedience to Qur'ānic precepts - and externally as they combine to oppose anything which conflicts with the revealed will of God. He draws on his experience in the United States, the West Indies, South America, Egypt, Syria, West and Central Africa, to give weight to his assertion that membership of the Muslim community has brought to many Negroes in Africa a sense

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1. ibid, page 3.
2. ibid, page 7.
3. ibid, pp. 6-7.
4. ibid, page 9.

of the dignity of human nature largely unknown to their brothers in Christian countries.[1.]

> 'Wherever the Negro is found in Christian lands, his leading trait is not docility, as has been often alleged, but servility'.[2.]

Nor has membership of the Christian community in these Christian countries led to a significant improvement in the dependent status of Negroes. In the case of Islam in Africa the situation is different.[3.] This leads Blyden to a further observation about the manner in which Islam is disseminated and established among pagan communities. The lesson to be learned by would-be Christian missionaries is clear.

> 'In all thriving Mohammedan communities, in West and Central Africa, it may be noticed that the Arab superstructure has been superimposed on a permanent indigenous substructure; so that what really took place, when the Arab met the Negro in his own home, was a healthy amalgamation, and not an absorption or an undue repression.
>
> The Oriental aspect of Islam has become largely modified in Negroland, not as is too generally supposed, by a degrading compromise with the Pagan superstitions, but by shaping many of its traditional customs to suit the milder and more conciliatory disposition of the Negro'.[4.]

This was in marked contrast to Christianity. The bitterness of Blyden's own experience in America is reflected in the following passage which is all the more disturbing to Christian complacency because it is placed side by side with his commendation of the social consequences of Islam. His style is repetitious and tendentious, but the message is clear. When Christianity came to

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1. cf. R. Bosworth Smith, op.cit., page 32.
2. CINR, page 10.
3. ibid, page 11.
4. ibid, pp. 11-12.

Negroes, they were already becoming enslaved to white masters. And Christianity, or rather, Christians, failed to liberate them.

> 'Along with the Christian teaching, (the Negroes) received lessons of their utter and permanent inferiority and subordination to their instructors, to whom they stood in the relation of chattels. Christianity took them fresh from the barbarism of ages, and forced them to embrace its tenets. The religion of Jesus was embraced by them as the only source of consolation in their deep disasters'.[1.]

The resilience and fortitude of those who received a form of Christianity which institutionalised and perpetuated their servitude are qualities which Blyden is, nevertheless, able to admire. His complaint is that the full potential of the Negro has been denied by the representatives of the very religion in which barriers of race should finally have been eliminated. This meant that the intellectual as well as the social aspirations of Negroes had been set aside.[2.] Negroes could make progress only by working within the narrow limits of the station allotted to them by white masters. Islam was a religion which offered better opportunities.

The Negro who has embraced Islam has felt nothing of "the withering power of caste".[3.] Neither his colour nor his race debar him from the highest offices in the community. Blyden

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1. ibid, page 12.

2. There were exceptions. Blyden was one - Crowther, another. Blyden again draws from his own experience: "Only a few here and there rise above the general degradation, and these become targets to their unappreciative brethren". ibid, page 13.

3. ibid, page 15.

argues that it must be clear that a Negro who has been brought up and educated in a Muslim community must know more about himself as a free creature of God, invested with human dignity, and with the opportunity to fulfil his promise, than one who has been trained "under the blighting influence of caste".[1.] Furthermore, in western literature,

> 'It has been the fashion for more than two hundred years to caricature the African, to ridicule his personal peculiarities, and to impress him with a sense of perpetual and hopeless inferiority. Christian literature has nothing to show on behalf of the Negro comparable to Mohammedan literature; and there is nothing in Mohammedan literature corresponding to the Negro - or 'nigger' - of Christian caricaturists'.[2.]

Blyden comments on a further advantage which he considers the Muslim Negro to have over his Christian brother. In doing so he takes up another observation from Bosworth Smith,

> 'The Mussulman missionaries exhibit a forbearance, a sympathy, and a respect for native customs and prejudices, and even for their more harmless beliefs, which is, no doubt, one reason of their success, and which our own missionaries and school-masters would do well to imitate'.[3.]

In Blyden's view the relationship between Negro student and foreign teacher is more natural and sympathetic, making possible a gradual transition from paganism to Islam.[4.] He argues that Muslim teachers have been able to identify with the people much more directly than their European Christian counterparts. Their

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1. ibid, page 17.
2. ibid, page 17.
3. R. Bosworth Smith, op.cit., page 34.
4. CINR, page 19.

links with African communities have a long history. By means of trade and inter-marriage they have succeeded in establishing Islamic teaching and learning among people with whom they choose to live. The Christians, on the other hand, tend to distance themselves from the Negroes whom they come to serve. Blyden attributes this, in part, to a physical reaction on the part of whites who find themselves in close proximity to blacks. The European, he writes,

> 'seldom or never gets over the feeling of distance if not of repulsion, which he experiences on first seeing the Negro. While he joyfully admits the Negro to be his brother, having the same nature in all its essential attributes, still, owing to the diversity in type and colour, he naturally concludes that the inferiority which to him appears on the surface must extend deeper than the skin, and affect the soul'.[1].

This preservation of distance between black and white has a demoralizing effect upon the Negro convert to Christianity, who feels rejected even when his profession of faith links him as a brother to his white teacher. The Negro thus continues to live a life apart, and learns to acquire a low opinion of himself,

> 'The Arab missionary, on the other hand, often of the same complexion as his hearer, does not 'require any long habit to reconcile the eye to him'....[2]. Innocent of the scientific attainments of the day, and with no other apparatus than his portable bed and dingy manuscripts, he may be inferior to the theological and classical scholar fresh from College in Europe or America, but he has the advantage of speaking to the people in a sympathetic and perfectly intelligible language'.[3].

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1. ibid, page 20.

2. Blyden quotes a line from a letter written by the Anglican Bishop Heber shortly after his arrival in India, "There is indeed, something in a Negro which requires long habit to reconcile the eye to him". See CINR, page 20, footnote 38.

3. CINR, page 21.

So far Blyden has adopted a highly favourable attitude to Islam, based upon his observations of the capacity of Muslims to provide for Negroes, a real and lasting liberation from paganism, without compromising their dignity as inheritors of (and participators in) a distinctive civilisation in West Africa. At the conclusion of the article from which these extracts have been taken, he introduces another line of thought which calls into question his thesis that Islam is the religion best suited to the needs and aspirations of the African Negro. He returns to Bosworth Smith, who-writing for a predominantly Christian-oriented European readership - insists that the evidence he has been able to adduce points to a less than satisfactory outcome for the African people.

> 'That Mohammedanism may, when mutual misunderstandings are removed, be elevated, chastened, purified by Christian influences and a Christian spirit, and that evils such as the slave-trade, which are really foreign to its nature, can be put down by the heroic efforts of Christian philanthropists, I do not doubt; and I can, therefore, look forward, if with something of anxiety, with still more of hope, to what seems the destiny of Africa, that Paganism and Devil-worship will die out, and that the main part of the continent, if it cannot become Christian, will become what is next best to it - Mohammedan'.[1].

According to this view Christianity can not prevail, at least in the short term. Its rôle is to influence and modify the deficiencies of Islam. Blyden acknowledges that in spite of

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1. ibid, page 40, quoting R. Bosworth Smith.

over three hundred years of contact with Christianity, West Africa has remained conspicuously unaffected by the Christian faith. He has given some of the reasons for this, and in the process has described the reasons for the successful propagation of Islam. Yet in spite of the inadequacies of European Christians he is unwilling to conclude that Islam can ultimately satisfy the deepest yearnings of the African people. The direction of his argument shifts when, in an unexpected contradiction of the position he has been defending, he asserts - almost as an act of faith - that Islam is, at best, only a preparation for the Gospel. This turns out to be less arbitrary than it may at first appear.

To assist in this transition he notes that both Islam and Christianity have to be assessed in terms of their highest principles. Adherents of both religions make it only too possible to make unfavourable comparisons between the ideal and the empirical reality of their daily lives. Here Blyden asks for understanding and fairness. Christians in the European tradition have, in the case of Christianity, frequently invoked the distinction between the ideal and the real, in order to commend the former as expressing universal principles, and to excuse the latter on grounds of human weakness. They have not been so prepared to use the same yard-stick for other religions, particularly Islam. It has been said, for example, that Islam has consecrated despotism, polygamy and slavery. Blyden queries the truth of this, and implies that even if Muslims have acted in such a way

as to give substance to the charge, it will still be necessary to examine the title-deeds of Islam to see how far such practices stand condemned from within Islam itself. By way of example he transposes the argument.

> 'A Mohammedan writer, taking the same superficial view of the effects of Christianity, and with the same love for epigrammatic terseness, might say, 'Christianity has consecrated drunkenness; it has consecrated Negro slavery; it has consecrated war; and he might gather ample materials for sustaining his position from the history of Christianity during the last three hundred years, especially in the Western hemisphere. When we see so many evils known to be antagonistic to the Christian religion still, after eighteen hundred years, prevalent in Christian lands, why should Mohammedanism be so fiercely assailed because, during the twelve hundred years of its existence, it has not extirpated from the countries in which it prevails all social evils? Must we not suppose that as with other creeds so with Islam, its theology is capable of being made subservient to worldly interests? May we not believe that many of the evils in lands under its sway are due, not to its teachings, but to human passions'?[1].

Blyden refuses to accept the prejudices of a former age, by which he feels that Islam has been misrepresented. He goes a long way in expressing admiration for its social structures, and commends its effect in building up the self-esteem of its Negro adherents. Nevertheless, he retains what he calls a conviction - for which no supporting evidence is given, such as he has already adduced in his arguments in favour of Islam - that it is to Christianity that Negroes and all the other races must <u>finally</u> turn. Negro Muslims are amenable to the Gospel, if it is presented to them in suitable ways. Such was Blyden's opinion.

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1. <u>CINR</u>, page 23.

> 'We entertain the deliberate conviction - gathered not from reading at home, but from travels among the people - that, whatever it may be in other lands, in Africa the work of Islam is preliminary and preparatory. Just as Ishmael came before Isaac in the history of the great Semitic families, so here the descendant of Ishmael has come before the illustrious descendant of Isaac. The African Mohammedans, as far as we have observed, are tolerant and accessible, anxious for light and improvement from any quarter. They are willing to have Christian schools in their town, to have the Christian Scriptures circulated among them, and to share with Christians the work of reclaiming the Pagans'.[1.]

The success of Islam is temporary and provisional. New generations of Christian missionaries will appear whose task will be to build on the foundations laid - not by Christians - but by Muslims.[2.]

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1. ibid, page 24; Crowther's attitude to Islam, also the fruit of much travel and direct observation, was different from Blyden's. He records, however, a similar openness to the Bible and a courteous response to his message on the part of Muslim leaders. See supra, page 90.

2. CINR, page 24; cf. Louis Massignon, "Les Trois Prières d'Abraham", in Opera Minora, Paris, 1969, pp. 804-816.

(b) Islam in West Africa.

In an article called "Mohammedanism in Western Africa", first published in the Methodist Quarterly Review in January 1871,[1] Blyden refers to the pioneer efforts of European scholars such as Nöldeke, Muir, Spanger and Deutsch to interpret Islam in a less hostile way. His attitude to Islam was illuminated by the conviction that a system "which has had so widespread an influence upon mankind", could not be wholly bereft of truth and goodness. He could not easily subscribe to the conventional European denigration of Islam,[2] nor accept without question the view that Muhammad was "the false prophet". However critical of Islam the Christian world had been, Blyden could not fail to notice that within the Muslim community, discrimination on grounds of race and colour was forbidden. For the aspirations of Negroes this was significant. Negroes wanted, above all, to be free from white domination, from colonial dependency, and from a sense of cultural inferiority. Rightly or wrongly Christianity had become identified with European white ascendancy. For the rest of his life Blyden continued to discuss the proposition that Islam offered better prospects for the fulfilment of Negro aspirations than Christianity, at least in the short term.

What was the nature of the benefits which the coming of Islam had secured for Africans? Blyden cites the absence of caste distinctions among Muslims, and mentions the resilient self-con-

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1. CINR, pp. 173-188.

2. See Norman Daniel, Islam, Europe and Empire, Edinburgh 1966, page xvi.

fidence which characterises the Muslim's approach to life which, inter-alia, leads him to wish to proselytise among pagans and others, so that they too may know the liberating effects of Islam. In addition there is the absence of any degrading drunkenness as a result of the Islamic proscription of intoxicating liquor. These examples serve to show Blyden's preoccupation with Negro dependency. Whites exploited the Negroes in America and were busy establishing an ascendancy in colonial Africa. White traders introduced those goods which - once accepted - were likely to increase Negro dependency on Europeans. This led to a further erosion of Negro self-confidence and esteem. Islam offered a way of liberation from all these evils.[1.]

The spread of Islam throughout West(ern) Africa was, in Blyden's view, a peaceful process. The individual Muslim teacher made a great contribution to the life of the community in which he lived, and his influence was essentially civilising. The Muslim teacher,

> 'instructs their children[2.] and professes to be the medium between them and Heaven, either for securing a supply of their necessities, or for warding off or removing calamities...
>
> ... The Mohammedan .. who enters a Pagan village with his books, and papers, and rosaries, his frequent ablutions and regularly-recurring times of prayers and prostrations, in which he appears to be conversing with some invisible being, soon acquires a controlling influence over the people. He secures their moral confidence and respect, and they bring to him all their difficulties for solution, and all their grievances for redress'.[3.]

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1. CINR, page 173.

2. cf. Renaud Santerre, Pédagogie musulmane d'Afrique noire. Montréal, 1973, pp. 41-101, "les maîtres coraniques".

3. CINR, page 176.

Blyden notes that Muslims are openly the people of the Book - the Qur'ān. Not only does the Qur'ān guide each activity in life, but it furnishes charms against the powers of evil. Short extracts from the last two sūrahs are written on slips of paper, enclosed in small leather cases two or three inches square and tied around the neck or wrist - rather like a Jewish phylactery.[1] The delight which Muslims take in reading and studying their holy Book prompts both Blyden's commendation of their piety and his condemnation of the dismissive attitude of some European observers.[2]

Blyden notes the thoroughness with which Muslims provide systematic education, based upon Islamic principles, for their children in schools, and later in centres of higher learning.

> 'First they are taught the letters and vowel marks, then they are taught to read the text, without receiving any insight into its meaning. When they can read fluently, they are taught the meaning of the words, which they commit carefully to memory; after which they are instructed in what they call the 'Jalaleyn', a running commentary on the Koran. While learning the Jalaleyn, they have side studies assigned them in Arabic manuscripts, containing the mystical traditions, the acts of Mohammed, the duties of fasting, prayer, alms, corporal purification, and so on. Young men who intend to be enrolled among the ulemas take up history and chronology, on which they have some fragmentary manuscripts. Before a student is admitted to the ranks of the learned, he must pass an examination, usually lasting seven days, conducted by a Board consisting of imams and ulemas. If he is successful, he is led around the town on'

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1. Crowther was opposed to this practice, and refused to provide similar charms incorporating extracts from the Bible for similar purposes. See supra, page 121.

2. CINR, page 177.

> horseback, with instrumental music and singing...
>
> After this, the candidate is presented with a sash or scarf, usually of fine white cloth, of native manufacture, which he is thenceforth permitted to wind round his cap, with one end hanging down the back, forming the Oriental turban. This is a sort of Bachelor of Arts diploma.'[1].

This kind of educational programme commended itself to Blyden. It provided the Negro with a line of self-development which was independent of European cultural domination. Here he drew not only on his detailed observations in West Africa but also on his experience in America. This latter experience suggested to him that the American Negro had suffered a cultural deprivation by following ideals established by white Christians. In doing so, without any noticeable advantages in terms of racial equality, Negroes had, in Blyden's considered view, denied their own unique heritage. African Negroes would have to learn from that experience. Although he was an ordained Presbyterian minister Blyden began to question the assumption that Christianity was best suited to assist Negroes to their proper status. This was not because Christianity, per se, perpetrated racial antagonisms, but rather that in its present forms it had assumed too European a character, too white a colouring.[2]. In America Christianity had debased the Negro. Islam promised them a better quality of life, without neglecting the fundamental religious aspirations of Negroes to serve the one true God. Later in his career he was critical of European based Christian missions and of missionaries, and his disapproval extended to the Africans whom they had educated.

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1. ibid, pp. 178-179.

2. So far as his racial theories were concerned Christianity had impeccable origins, but it had become too "Aryan", CINR, page 241; on the early connections with the African continent, see ibid, "Philip and the Eunuch", pp. 152-172.

Blyden was ready to point out that an education based upon Islamic principles[1]. was not as defective as some critics supposed. The Qur'ān was the most important, but not the only book which Muslims were expected to study. In Muslim libraries Blyden had seen,

> 'Extensive manuscripts in poetry and prose. One showed us at Boporo, the Makamat of Hariri, which he read and expounded with great readiness, and seemed surprised that we had heard of it. And it is not to be doubted that some valuable Arabic manuscripts may yet be found in the heart of Africa. Dr. Barth tells us that he saw, in Central Africa, a manuscript of those portions of Aristotle and Plato which had been translated into Arabic, and that an Arabic version of Hippocrates was extremely valued. The splended voweled edition of the New Testament and Psalms recently issued by the American Bible Society, and of which, through the kindness of friends in New York, we have been enabled to distribute a few copies among them, is highly prized'.[2].

Blyden summarises his impressions of the impact of Islam on West African society by drawing attention to the existence of ancient centres of civilisation, learning, commerce and industry - all of which owed their influence to Islam. He singles out the Nigerian cities of Kano and Sokoto[3]. as notable examples, whose existence was largely unknown to the white inheritors of Mediterranean culture, who continued to think of Africa as the dark (and uncivilized) continent. The free movement of Arabic speaking Muslims across the vast tracts of the Sahara and the Central Sudan made for a creative exchange of ideas as well as

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1. cf. A.L. Tibawi, Islamic Education, Luzac, 1972, pp. 35-46.
2. CINR, page 179.
3. ibid, page 186.

of trade. Perhaps the most significant single contribution of Islam to the social order was the elimination of slavery, at least for members of the Muslim community.[1.]

In spite of this general praise for the contribution of Islam to the life of Africa, Blyden's attitude to Islam does not amount to unqualified approval, or to the suggestion that Islam was true and Christianity false. He never became a Muslim himself, and even though his formal links with the institutional church were effectively broken when he resigned from the Presbyterian ministry in 1886, he seems to have retained the belief that ultimately Islam, even at its best, was only a preparation for the Gospel, and that the Negro's true spiritual destiny was to be found within the fellowship of a refined Christianity, purged of white domination and European cultural accretion.[2.]

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1. ibid.

2. ibid, page 188.

(c) The failure of Christian Missions in West Africa; some lessons from Islam.

In 1876, just over a decade after Crowther became the first black African to attain episcopal rank in the Anglican Church, Blyden addressed himself to the question of Christian Missions in West Africa.[1] By that time Crowther was experiencing difficulties in carrying on his missionary work as the result of a change in European attitudes to the development of a Negro-led indigenous church in the Niger diocese. In the section of Blyden's work to be discussed now, his main purpose is to focus attention on the record of Christian missions, but in the course of his essay he reveals, on several occasions, aspects of his attitude to Islam.

His essay presents a stark analysis of the failings and missed opportunities of Christian missionaries to employ the precepts and practices of Christianity to remove the causes of the Negro's deepest sufferings. European Christians have, in Blyden's view, failed to help Negroes to achieve an adequate measure of social and intellectual parity with whites. The apparent inability of Christians to realise the equality to which the Gospel points suggests to Blyden that, in the short term, Islam may have more to offer to the Negro than a Christianity interpreted and dominated by Europeans. This contrast between the ways in which Christianity and Islam affect the daily lives of Negroes is well brought out in

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1. "Christian Missions in West Africa", in Fraser's Magazine, October, 1876; see CINR, pp. 46-70.

this essay. Blyden's method is descriptive. He does not attempt to construct a new theory of Christian missions in Africa, but he does suggest ways in which those responsible for missionary training and policy might reflect on future activity. He sees in the record of Islam a salutory reminder of the deficiencies of Christian practice. Christians, he avers, have much to learn from a religion which they have been led to belittle, and much to learn from Muslims about a proper respect for a race of human beings they have also presumed to despise. Blyden can not forget the indignities heaped upon Negroes by white masters in the United States.[1.]

He pays tribute to the work of Livingstone, who had recently awakened the conscience of many people in Britain, not only to provide support for the task of evangelism, but also to recognize that the churches in Africa have an important rôle in promoting the work of African regeneration. The task calls for systematic reflection.

> 'It is evident that, at the present moment, there is no mission field in which the Christian public are so anxiously interested for the safety, welfare and success of the missionaries as the African; and there is none, moreover, whose successful working by European missionaries must, in the long run, depend so absolutely upon special and constant study of the mental and moral habits of the people and climatic peculiarities of the country. And yet in the constant necessity which presses upon missionary committees at home, and upon missionaries themselves, to find what may hold the public ear, in the impatient demand for immediate visible results in the unceasing strain after fresh subjects for exciting paragraphs, no leisure or repose is left for quiet thought, for grappling with new facts, or for giving due weight to views out of their accustomed groove of thought'.[2.]

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1. CINR, page 46.

2. ibid, page 47.

Blyden proceeds to review some of the results of Christian missionary presence in West Africa. The treatment is cursory, but not superficial.

> 'It is now nearly four hundred years since the first attempt was made to introduce Christianity into the Western portion of Africa. The summary of Christian Missions on this coast may be given in a few words.
>
> The Roman Catholics come first. In 1481 the King of Portugal sent ten ships with 500 soldiers, 100 labourers, and a proper complement of priests as missionaries, to Elmina. The Romish missions thus founded, lingered on for a period of 241 years, till, at last, in 1723, that of the Capuchins at Sierra Leone was given up, and they disappeared altogether from West Africa. They had made no impression, except upon their immediate dependants; and what little impression they made on them was soon totally obliterated.
>
> Protestant missionary attempts were begun by the Moravians in 1736, and continued till 1770. Five of such attempts cost eleven lives, and were not followed by visible results.
>
> The Wesleyans come next. In the Minutes of the Conference of 1792 we find Africa for the first time included in the list of Wesleyan missionary stations, Sierra Leone being the part occupied, and in the Minutes for 1796, the names of A. Murdoch and W. Patten are set down as missionaries to the Foulah country, in Africa, to which service they were solemnly set apart by the Conference.
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> The Church Missionary Society sent out its first missionaries in 1804. They established and attempted to maintain ten stations among the aborigines, but they could make no progress owing to the hostility of the natives, who appear to have preferred the slave-traders. The missionaries were forced to take refuge in Sierra Leone, the only place where at that time they could labour with safety and hope.
>
> The Basle Missionary Society - one of the most successful on the coast - had their attention directed to Western Africa as early as 1826; but it was not until 1828 that their first company of missionaries reached Christianborg, near Akra, the place which the Moravians had attempted to occupy more than thirty years previously.

> The United Presbyterian Synod of Scotland began a mission on the Old Calabar River, in the Gulf of Benin, in April 1846.
>
> Five denominations of American Christians - Baptists, Methodist, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans - are represented on the coast - in Liberia, at Lagos, the Island of Corisco, and Gaboon. The first American Mission was established on the coast in 1822'.[1].

He notes that this endeavour is the result of European initiative but questions the continuing dominance of European leadership.

> 'While, like David, they may receive commendation for having conceived the idea of building the great Christian temple in Africa, it may be only given to them to open the way, collect the materials, etc.; other hands may have to rear the superstructure'.[2].

The results of this missionary endeavour are acknowledge by Blyden, but not without criticism. European Christian settlements along the West African coast have led to the founding of numerous Christian churches. Under the influence of Christian teaching, Africans have professed Christianity, been gathered into schools, and have adopted European styles of speech and dress. Some of them have achieved notable success.

> 'The Niger Mission and the native pastorate - which latter has received the encomiums of friends and foes - are standing monuments of the (Church Missionary) Society's labours, and proofs of the permanence of results thus far achieved. Bishop Crowther, the first Negro Bishop, the Rev. James Johnson of Lagos, Dr. Africanus Horton, the distinguished physician and author, and numerous others, less widely known but not less useful, sat under the instructions which have been imparted in the Church Missionary College at Fourah Bay, in Sierra Leone'.[3].

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1. ibid, pp. 48-49.
2. ibid, page 48, footnote 1.
3. West African Reporter, issue of 4 January 1876; CINR, page 49.

Other Africans have been equipped with skills more appropriate, perhaps, to the needs of a young country. Clerks and government officials, merchants and businessmen, as well as skilled mechanics, have been given initial training by some missionaries - notably by the Basle mission. But Blyden notes that this kind of vocational training is a strictly limited form of missionary activity. The interior of the country remains substantially untouched.[1] Even around the coastal settlements, the Christian communities seem to have exercised little lasting influence on daily life.[2]

The comparative failure of Christianity to transform the lives of significant numbers of Africans, in spite of so much effort and sacrifice over many years, prompts Blyden to ask why this should be so. He suggests several reasons.

> 'The first and most generally admitted cause is the unhealthiness of the climate; and this cause, we may promise, affects injuriously all progress and growth in West Africa to a far greater extent than is generally supposed.... Now it is well known that a belt of malarious lands, which are hotbeds of fever, extends along the whole of the West Coast of Africa, running from forty to fifty miles back from the sea-coast. In this region of country neither cattle nor horses will thrive. Horses will not live at all. Sheep, goats and hogs drag out an indifferent existence.... In the elevated regions of the interior of West Africa, where there are no dense primeval forests, extensive swamps, and pestilential jungles, cattle and horses show no sign of 'infection' or 'poisoned state of the blood'. They flourish in uncounted herds. And in those regions men are healthy, vigorous and intelligent... The steady physical if not mental, deterioration going on among the

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1. CINR, page 50; for Crowther's views, see Church Missionary Intelligencer, August, 1875.

2. African Times, 1 January 1876; CINR, page 50.

> descendants of re-captives at Sierra Leone is sometimes attributed by superficial observers to their having enjoyed facilities for European education superior to their fathers. But the same decay is observable among the Mohammedan creoles who have not deviated much from the customs of their ancestors'.[1.]

Blyden clearly considered that the fever-ridden coastal areas were unfit for any lasting human endeavour, and suggested that the healthier areas of the interior should receive more attention.[2.] A second factor, which inhibits the work of Christian mission, in Blyden's view, is the contemptuous attitude to the indigenous people, demonstrated by white expatriates.

> 'They come to the coast imbued with the notions they have derived from books, of the 'sanguinary customs' and 'malignant superstitions' of the natives. And under the influence of their malarious surroundings they gain more in irritability of temper than in liberality of view, often acquiring greater ignorance of the people than they had before they came'.[3.]

The inadequacy of the European estimate of the Negro as a human being is based upon a feeling of racial supremacy which Blyden is at pains to correct. But, he affirms, it is possible to remove prejudice of this kind, and Christian mission ought to be in the forefront of the struggle against colour prejudice.[4.]

Criticism of the Negro is not limited to denigration of the superstitious pagan, however. Blyden notes that even among Christian missionaries, there is a lamentable ignorance of the devout

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1. CINR, pp. 52-54.
2. ibid, page 55.
3. ibid, page 55.
4. ibid, page 58.

Muslim, and a grotesque misrepresentation of the level of Muslim piety and educational achievement. Quoting the editor of the Church Missionary Intelligencer,

> 'in the waiting-room of Euston Square Station all the Mohammedan Negroes in Africa who have read the Koran, even once, might be most comfortably accommodated. The priests themselves cannot distinguish between "mumpsimus" and "sumpsimus" when they jabber the Koran, and do not attempt to understand other Arabic books'.[1].

- he comments, not surprisingly, that it is not by such weapons that Africa is to be penetrated. His fundamental point remains after allowing for the level of exaggeration which his polemical approach appears to require. This point is that the work of Christianizing Africa calls for a much more systematic preparation based upon the facts of the case. He answers the misrepresentation quoted above from his own direct observation. Only a few hours' travel from Sierra Leone - if he would only venture to visit the Coast - would take the writer of the paragraph quoted above to,

> 'A Mohammedan town where he would be able to count hundreds of Arabic volumes read and understood by their owners, and where he would find little boys who have read the Koran through...
>
> At a town not far from Billeh, a Foulah boy, not more than fourteen years old, was introduced to us as Hafiz - one who knows the Koran by heart. We tried him on several long chapters, and he recited them verbatim, literatim, et punctuatim, without the slightest hesitation. But he was only one of a number of such youths, whom we met in subsequent travels in the interior, who could recite not only the Koran, but many of the standard Arabic poems. Are there many youths in Christian lands who could recite even one book of the Bible from memory'?[2].

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1. ibid, page 61; Church Missionary Intelligencer, August 1874, page 247.

2. CINR, pp. 61-62.

Here is the point of transition in the essay where Blyden's attitude to Islam begins to emerge as he considers the intellectual impact of Islam on those for whom Christianity has done nothing comparable. There are two aspects to this. First there is the record of Muslims in transmitting an ancient cultural tradition based upon a respect for the dignity and potential of the Negro. By contrast Christians have failed to grasp the depth of the yearning of the African for knowledge, and his capacity to acquire it. Second there is what amounts to culpable ignorance on the part of Europeans of Islamic history and thought - an ignorance which needs to be dispelled by patient study if Christians really want Africans to see in their faith a religion which is ever to displace Islam. Blyden's message to missionaries is clear - learn to understand and appreciate what you presume to criticise. In his analysis of the situation the continuing African rejection of Christianity is pragmatic rather than metaphysical. This is because Islam offers a securer base for the human aspirations of the Negro than Christianity. Until this fundamental inequality between the races is removed, the cause of Christianity in Africa will continue to languish. Islam, thus, becomes a touchstone for Christianity - a pace-setter in the emancipation of the, as yet, unliberated Negro.

Turning to another example Blyden sends Christians to the school of Islam, to learn a lesson about the essential coherence of life in the Muslim community. The refusal to accept a compromise between the sacred and the secular, and the insistence that education is a process by which the young are trained to take their place as members of the umma - the community of the faith-

ful - are characteristic of the Muslim view of life. Blyden is not so uncritical as to identify the empirical reality with the ideal among Muslims, but he sees that in Islam there is at least an ideal - favourable to Negroes - at which to aim. This ideal is also present in Christianity, but it has become obscured in Christian praxis. He uses Islam to draw attention to this deficiency, and calls upon Christians to re-discover a fundamental principle in their own religion which they have overlooked.

> 'In the pending controversy, for example, about religious and secular education, Christians might profit by the example of Mohammedan communities where the one involves and is inseparable from the other. Their education is religious and their religion educational. The example set by them in the constant and unremitting study of their sacred book, the Koran, is not unworthy of imitation'.[1].

Missionaries appear to be more interested in imposing their own cultural ideas on people for whom they are inappropriate. The young, and inexperienced missionary,

> 'preaches a crusade against the harmless customs and prejudices of the people - superseding many customs and habits necessary and useful in the climate and for the people by practices which, however useful they might be in Europe, become, when introduced indiscriminately into Africa, artificial, ineffective and absurd'.[2].

A further drawback to the success of Christian missions on the West African coast is "the pernicious example of European traders and other non-missionary residents".[3]. He comments that throughout the period of European exploration and exploitation of

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1. ibid, page 63.
2. ibid, page 64.
3. ibid, page 67.

that part of Africa, Europe has been represented by "some of its vilest characters".[1.] What they are, and do, is so obtrusively degrading that it ruins the work the Christian missionaries are trying to do.

This was the general opinion of European traders, although even in Blyden's time there were notable examples of British entrepreneurs who were men of principle and vision. John Holt of Liverpool was one such man.[2.] It has to be admitted that the traders introduced and stimulated the liquor trade, especially in spirits. Blyden notes this as a significant fact in the demoralization of many indigenous Africans who were almost defenceless against the ravages of alcohol. Indirectly this was a further factor which militated against the success of Christian mission. Even those whites who had no knowledge of, and no interest in, Christianity, or in the way of life which flowed from it, were identified as Christians. Thus there were "Christians" whose gospel differed from that of other Christians and whose "witness" brought - not salvation - but a degrading type of enslavement.

Here again, and by way of contrast, Blyden turns to Islam, and compares the record.

> 'We need hardly mention that one of the most pernicious elements in the demoralization of the coast is ardent spirits. It is a very fortunate circumstance for Africa that the Mohammedans of the interior present so formidable and impenetrable a barrier to the desolating flood which, but for

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1. ibid, page 67.

2. See supra, page 40, footnote 1.

> them, would sweep across the continent. The abstemiousness of Islam is one of its good qualities which we should like Africans to retain, whatever may be the future fortunes of that faith on this continent'.[1].

Here is no description, or explanation, of Islamic teaching. Nor is there an attempt to compare or reconcile the two distinct systems of belief and practice. Blyden is still convinced of the inherent supremacy of Christianity, but concerned to point out the tactical blunders of Christians who might be expected to approach the Negro with at least as much sympathy as is common among the inheritors of a less complete revelation - Islam. He concludes this essay with a cautionary note, which singles him out as a realist.

> 'We may remark, in conclusion, that, in view of the great work to be done in Africa, and the innumerable hindrances thereto, it will be seen that a profound conviction of the exclusive truth of the Gospel and an earnest zeal for the conversion of souls - though necessary and indispensable - are not the only qualifications needed by the missionary. The Christian missionaries in Africa should not only be well trained, highly educated, and large-minded men, but they should be men of imagination, logical power, and philosophic spirit, understanding how to set most effectively to work in clearing away what is really evil, in order to lay a durable foundation and erect a permanent superstructure of good. They should be men who understand that it is useless to pour new wine into old bottles and who will be content to prepare the soil by the painful and judicious husbandry of years, if not of generations'.[2].

The great work is the evangelization of Africa. A vital part of that work is to understand Islam in its social implications, as

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1. CINR, page 68.

2. ibid, pp. 69-70.

well as to reconsider the Gospel of love preached by Christ.

> 'Christianity is not only a local religion, but it has adapted itself to the people wherever it has gone. No language or social existence has been any barrier to it; and I have often thought that in this country[1]. it will acquire wider power, deeper influence, and become instinct with a higher vitality than anywhere else. When we look at the treatment which our own race and other so-called inferior races have received from Christian nations, we cannot but be struck with the annoying dissimilitude and disproportion between the original idea of Christianity, as expressed by Christ, and the practice of it by his professed followers'.[2].

Not even his insistence on the poor record of Christians to live up to the ideals of their faith could entirely conceal from Blyden the exceptions to his general point. It is interesting to note that for all the recognition given to Crowther - both in Nigeria as well as Europe - the Bishop is rarely mentioned by Blyden.[3]. The following extract is more typical of Blyden's attempts to soften the impact of his general criticism of Christians. Even so, the example he chooses is far removed from Africa.

> 'Whatever may be the ecclesiastical connection of the thoughtful and cultivated Protestant Negro[4]. though he may ex animo subscribe to the tenets of the particular denomination to which he belongs, as approaching nearest to the teachings of God's Word - yet he cannot read History without feeling that the Negro race owes a deep debt of gratitude to the Roman Catholic Church. The only Christian Negroes who have had the power successfully to

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1. i.e. Liberia.

2. "The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans", an inaugural address by Blyden on his installation as President of Liberia College, 5 January 1881, CINR, page 89.

3. Blyden does pay a tribute to Crowther in a lecture given in Lagos in 1890, not long before the Bishop died. See infra, page 261.

4. The description fits Blyden himself.

> throw off oppression, and maintain their position as freemen, were Roman Catholic Negroes - the Haitians; and the greatest Negro the Christian world has yet produced was a Roman Catholic - Toussaint Louverture'.[1.]

This comment is, perhaps, surprising - coming as it does from a man who was an ordained minister in the reformed tradition. The present writer has been able to find no evidence in Blyden's writings which would support the view that Blyden admired among Roman Catholics, or Muslims, anything other than their record of accepting the Negro as an individual entitled to human dignity. Nowhere does Blyden feel obliged to consider the doctrinal basis of any particular ecclesiastical group, or of Islam, as something which challenges him in a personal way and requires of him a public testimony of submission to this, or that, confessional position. As he grew older he sat ever more lightly to any form of ecclesiastical and doctrinal authority, measuring everything by the pragmatic test of the racial question. The Gospel of Christ could not, in his view, be confined within any existing church. In September 1886 he resigned as a minister of the Presbyterian Church, and began to describe himself as a Minister of Truth. This decision does not seem to have been taken in haste. A number of disappointments at critical points of his career must have pushed him further in this direction. The severance of his links with C.M.S., was a case in point.[2.] The refusal of European church leaders to countenance the continuation of ancient

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1. "Christianity and the Negro Race", CINR, page 39.

2. See supra, page 199.

social institutions, such as polygamy, when Africans became Christians, was another factor.[1.] Later on, in 1890, he visited Lagos, where he found many African Christians opposed to the C.M.S. policy in the Niger mission - a policy which seemed likely to perpetuate European dominance. He gave a lecture calling for the formation of an African church which would meet the needs of all Christians in West Africa.[2.] In time, his words inspired the work of those who founded the United Native African Church,[3.] but the unity which he envisaged - an organic unity, modelled on that of Islam - was not to come. The independent spirit, which he had consistently fostered in Negroes, found expression in the formation of the independent, separatist, churches in Nigeria.[4.] This was a paradox, the full irony of which, he did not live long enough to savour.[5.]

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1. Blyden's marriage was unhappy (supra, page 208). Anna Erskine, a black school-teacher from Louisiana acted as his wife for many years, and gave him five children. See EWB, pp. 216-217.

2. The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church, London, 1891.

3. J.B. Webster, The African Churches among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, Oxford, 1964, pp. 65-66.

4. See, for example, J.D.Y. Peel, Aladura: a Religious Movement among the Yoruba, Oxford, 1968, chapter 9; Harold Turner, African Independent Churches, Oxford, 1967.

5. See, Hugh Dinwiddy, "Missions and Missionaries as portrayed by English-speaking writers of Contemporary African Literature", in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. E. Fashole-Luke et al, London, 1978, pp. 427-428.

7. Walter Miller: the Apostle to the Hausas.

> 'I pray first for a Hausa Moslem prophet to arise among his own people, with one desire: to lead his people through repentance to God; and then that God may raise up some Englishmen, with wisdom and an enlightened keeness, who will learn how to deal with the religion of Islam here, how to use it, and to love its people; how to bring everything that is of God in the religion of the Prophet, and sublimate it, not by argument or spiritless propaganda, but by the mighty power of the love of Christ'.[1].

> 'A team of young missionaries led by Bishop Tugwell, set out from Lagos 52 years ago on a trek of 700 miles. After three months of hardship they reached their destination - the city of Kano, in the heart of the Muslim emirates of northern Nigeria. They were refused admittance and withdrew to Zaria, where one of the members of the team a young doctor who had recently qualified at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, succeeded in establishing an outpost of Christendom. At first the prejudice against this Christian missionary was so great that it proved quite impossible for him to engage in medical work; so Dr. Miller turned his attention to educational activities and built up a boys' school that soon became known far and wide. From this school came the first of the Hausa people who were qualified to hold responsible positions in Government service'.[2].

Like both Crowther and Blyden, Miller had a long life. He died at the age of eighty in 1952, having dedicated the last fifty-two years of his life to the service of the people of what was then

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1. W.R.S. Miller, Reflections of a Pioneer, C.M.S., London, 1936, pp. 218-219, (henceforth WMRP).

2. From the obituary notice, Dr. Walter Miller, in the Times of 27 August 1952.

Northern Nigeria. For him there is no semi-official biography such as that which Page wrote of Crowther, which for all its usefulness lacks the sharp and critical edge of a more objective study. By the time Miller died the fashion had changed. Britain was no longer a great imperial power, with an empire and a reputation for colonial competence to defend and justify. Within eight years of Miller's death, Nigeria was an independent state. One of those who helped to develop the talents of indigenous people to assume the responsibilities of self-government was Miller. He remains an enigmatic figure. The details of his career are not easy to assemble. His exercise in autobiography is brief, and it conceals many of the details about which the student would like to have more precise information.[1.] His foreword reveals a forthright style.

> 'A man must be inordinately conceited or else have an unusually good story to tell who will sit down and write his own biography fully expecting that it will be published during his life time'.
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> 'Only two autobiographies of the many I have read have strongly appealed to me: they were those of Charlie Andrews of India, and Albert Schweitzer of Lambarene. These were both great men and outside the range of the criticism above'.[2.]

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1. W.R.S. Miller, Walter Miller: an Autobiography, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1952 (henceforth WMA). In this short work Miller admits that he writes more about his friends than himself. "... this is quite inevitable for I am largely what my friends have made me" (page 7). This is a criticism which has been made of the autobiography of one of his friends and co-workers, M.A.C. Warren, Crowded Canvas, Hodder and Stoughton, 2nd. imp. 1975. See F.W. Dillistone, Into All the World, a biography of Max Warren, Hodder and Stoughton, 1980. The present writer owes a great deal to the personal encouragement of both Dr. Warren, and Dr. Dillistone.

2. WMA, Foreword.

Miller was one of eight children born to parents who were devout Christians. He had seven sisters, one of whom was to spend even longer in Nigeria than he did himself.[1.] His parents were neither influential nor affluent. His father's intellectual gifts were not encouraged in childhood and Miller recalls this sense of unfulfilment which, to some extent, marred the life of his parents.[2.] He describes his mother as a saint "in the highest sense of the word".

> 'Hoping for a son, after having borne several daughters, she had, like Hannah with Samuel, dedicated me to God for the Mission Field, and with that hope in view I was given the name of Samuel as well as Walter'.[3.]

He was born in Honiton, in Devonshire, in 1872 and retained clear memories of that countryside throughout his life, even though the family moved to Clifton, Bristol, when he was nine years old. Living in retirement near Jos, he looked out on a familiar view.

> 'The view from the back of the house might be Devonshire, or Dartmoor with a number of Tors rising from five hundred to a thousand feet high above the level of the Plateau'.[4.]

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1. Edith P. Miller, Change Here for Kano, Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Nigeria, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1960.

2. Miller senior was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and had a piece of work "St. Kilda" presented to Edward VII. His vicar tried to persuade him to take Holy Orders as a priest in the Anglican Church, but he came under the influence of a group of Plymouth Brethren and declined. In time he became a successful coal and timber merchant.

3. WMA, page 1.

4. ibid, page 69.

Miller provides few details of his early life, but recalls as formative events two incidents which helped to decide the course of his career. Helped by a governess who taught all the children in the family, he read accounts in The Daily News of the atrocities committed by the Turks in the Balkans. His hatred for Turkey dates from that moment.

> "... when later the Armenian massacres were perpetrated I felt ready to join any irregular army that might be found to go out and fight them. I was at the time a good respectable Tory but the policy of the Conservative Government in supporting Turkey, and Mr. Gladstone's fiery crusade against the Sublime Porte did something towards turning me into a liberal'.[1].

The second memory provides a scene from the streets of Honiton. The members of the local Salvation Army Corps, conducting their open-air services, were subjected to indignity and personal attack by groups of mocking louts. Miller and his father identified themselves with the Salvationists.

> 'My father tried hard to use his not inconsiderable influence in the town, both with the civil and Church authorities, to get the disgraceful conduct of these brutes stopped. It was useless. So he went himself to many of their open-air meetings, stood by them in the streets when stones were often hurled and people injured'.[2].

At this time his father was a member of a very strict and pious assembly of the Plymouth Brethren. Their concept of scriptural holiness was too negative for Miller. What they defined as worldly (and for that reason to be shunned), comprehended a long list of human pleasures, without penetrating to the heart of the matter.

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1. WMA, page 2.

2. ibid, page 2.

They identified love of the world with attendance at theatre, concert-hall and race-meetings. The reading of novels was proscribed. The consumption of alcohol and tobacco was also an index of worldliness. The general rejection of all these things seemed to leave no room for the exceptions which an individual might make after considering the evidence of a particular case. It happened that many of the things forbidden by the members of the sect were also rejected by Miller as a matter of private conviction, but he found the puritanical strictures too irksome. As a student he finally broke with the sect, and although his name is associated with the evangelical wing of the Anglican church as a medical missionary of the Church Missionary Society, he continued to retain an independence of spirit and judgement which made him a difficult member of any ecclesiastical institution.

When he was eleven, he was sent to an unnamed preparatory school for Clifton College, but was disappointed not to be sent on to the senior school. Rather coyly, and with an anonymity which characterizes his description of these early years, he records that he was sent instead "to a private school".[1.] Yet it was in Clifton that he was converted as a boy of fourteen, at a Children's Special Service Mission (C.S.S.M.), through the ministry of Edwin Arrowsmith. The experience was real, "but it was too superficial".[2.] Of his time at his private school Miller records nothing. At the age of sixteen he matriculated for entrance to London University,

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1. WMA, page 2.

2. ibid, page 3.

and after some cursory discussion about the possibility of a career in the family business, or entering the Indian Civil Service, he gained the firm conviction that he should become a medical doctor. The rather self-conscious defence of his educational background continued into the choice of a university. He frequently returned to the point made in the following extract, which refers to his registration at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School.

> 'This world-famed Hospital to which I had the good fortune to become a student as a boy of nineteen is older in its foundation than either of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge or Edinburgh'.
>
> 'Medical studies at Barts, were to lead me ultimately, first to Sierra Leone, and then in the first pioneer Missionary party to Northern Nigeria, then known as "Hausaland".[1].

Miller gives no idea of the kind of course offered to the students at Barts, and mentions nothing of any problems he may have faced. Only a few friends appear - for the most part men who were to make a mark on the mission field. What does emerge clearly is his increasing social concern, and the transformation of his hitherto unchallenged Tory politics. At Toynbee Hall, the Oxford and Cambridge settlement in Whitechapel, he saw for himself some of the social problems which people had to face. In addition he met some of the leaders of the, as yet, still young labour movement. This had a profound effect on his life, for here he encountered Christians who were trying to live out the social implications of their faith in an area of great human need. His cousin, Richard Kittle, was a sub-warden at Toynbee Hall at that time.[2].

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1. ibid, page 3.
2. ibid, page 4. Kittle was a Unitarian; see infra, page 353. In spite of Unitarian leanings, Miller maintained that the Cross of Christ was the central theme of the universe. WMBN, file 1, Diary from Hausaland, 10 March 1908. Later still he appeared to accept the Muslim critique of the Trinity, WMBN, file 2, letter to Bishop of Guildford, 9 January 1936.

The qualities of the future "apostle of the Hausa people"[1]. were already discernible. He was a Christian set in a particular mould. Christianity meant personal surrender to Christ and a personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord. Theological niceties and denominational differences were not important. His own evangelical experience was united with a strong sense of personal mission. He felt obliged to present Christ to all he met. This reaching out to other people was combined with a sturdy individualism and a respect for the convictions of others. At the same time he was no mystic. He was one of a growing number who insisted that Christians have a duty to care for the body as for the soul of their neighbour. Christians, he felt, have to have a social conscience. Their faith obliges them to care for the material needs of others and to alleviate their sufferings. In Whitechapel, Miller met Keir Hardie and Ben Tillett, at the time of the London Dock Strike. He met a new kind of politics, and he took the first step on a road which led him to declare himself a Christian Socialist.[2]

Three further incidents influenced his decision to offer as a missionary candidate. During the second year of his medical course he was invited to visit the Keswick Convention. The meetings there, held in a large tent in the beautiful Lakeland town, were attended by evangelical Christians from many parts of the world. This annual convention is distinguished by the zealous appeals for commitment to Christ, in all walks of life, which are addressed to everyone,

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1. Times, obituary notice, 27 August 1952.

2. See infra, page 309.

but especially to young people. During the course of the convention Miller heard several people speaking about Jesus as Lord and Master. Mrs. Bird Bishop, who had travelled extensively in Tibet - though not as a missionary - appealed for doctors and others to offer themselves for missionary service abroad. Miller felt called, and decided that night to offer himself. The second incident was his own meeting with members of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union. He received a declaration form at one of their meetings and this put his new resolution to the test. He wrote pledging himself to serve God abroad as a missionary. The third incident was his meeting with Canon (afterwards Bishop) Taylor Smith, Canon Missioner of Sierra Leone. Miller was invited to go to a University camp for Public School boys, as an officer, where Taylor Smith was acting as Chaplain.[1.]

Another strong influence on Miller's development was Dr. James Maxwell, the Warden of the Barts students' hostel at 49 Highbury Park, where Miller lodged in his third year. Miller names three men, above all, who influenced him most, Taylor Smith, Maxwell, and the great colonial administrator in northern Nigeria, Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard. Maxwell impressed Miller at this time by his faith, his courage, his resilience and his determination to present the Gospel in ways which the people of distant foreign countries could understand and appreciate.[2.]

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1. WMA, page 5.

2. ibid, page 6.

It was while he was staying with Maxwell at Highbury Park that he finally broke his links with the Plymouth Brethren, although he remained a keen evangelical. More and more of his time was taken up by the Christian Union at Barts, of which he was secretary. Several "keen men"[1.] were invited from Oxford and Cambridge to conduct a mission to the Hospital students. Among those invited were W.E.S. Holland, J.H. Oldham and Douglas Thornton. Students from the larger London teaching hospitals were invited to tea and to listen to the "simple, clear talks from our visitors, most of them undergraduates".[2.]

Shortly after this Miller faced his final examinations and failed in Surgery.[3.] This was a great blow to his plans. Donald Fraser, at that time Chairman of the Committee and acting General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement, lifted his depression by inviting him to become travelling secretary of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union. He accepted, though not without some misgivings, and then only after Fraser had used all his powers of persuasion. During the following year Miller visited Universities, Colleges, Theological Colleges and Medical Schools in Great Britain and Ireland. He was involved in the administration of the organisation as well as in personal evangelistic work. The first gave him experience in running a lively enterprise - with very little money. The second gave him insights into the transformation which could

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1. WMA, page 8.
2. ibid, page 8.
3. ibid, pp. 9-10.

take place when an individual became a committed Christian.

Failure in his examinations had strengthened his resolve. He got down to three months' hard work, in the knowledge that Fraser and all his other Christian friends were praying for a successful outcome. Miller digresses at this point on a subject which continued to interest him - the guidance of God. His scientific training taught him to be sceptical about talk of providence or guidance, but he could not dismiss his own experience as auto-suggestion, telepathy, coincidence or accident. As a Christian he saw in the course of his daily life the guiding hand of the God in whom he had placed his trust. A premonition prompted him to spend the last few hours before the examination in studying the topic on which he had previously failed. The topic came up again, and what is more - he was sent to the same examiner. This time he answered well, and passed.[1].

Having qualified Miller was free to take up his appointment with the Student Volunteer Missionary Union. The Committee of the parent body, the Student Christian Movement, consisted of some gifted men and women. Among them were J.H. Oldham - distinguished as much for his work for Christian causes as for his labours in international affairs at various departments of the Civil Service. W.E.S. Holland was the founder of the Oxford and Cambridge Hostel in Allahabad, spending several years as a missionary in India before returning to England to become Vicar of St. Mary Woolnoth's. Alec Fraser served

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1. ibid, page 10.

in Trinity College, Kandy. His work there was of a kind "that can never be fully estimated towards preparing Ceylon for Home Rule".[1.] Fraser also founded the Prince of Wales College at Achimota on the Gold Coast (Ghana). Rulter Williamson was a doctor like Miller. His work was as a missionary doctor in the West Indies. Temple Gairdner made his mark as a missionary among Muslims in Cairo.[2.] Miller, who was to insist that a mastery of the main language of the people among whom a missionary worked was the first requirement after a lively faith, was quick to acknowledge Gairdner's mastery of Arabic.[3.] Miller later spent three months in Cairo with Gairdner trying to acquire some Arabic. He did not succeed. Gairdner found this strange because of Miller's legendary command of Hausa.[4.]

In the summer of 1897, towards the end of his period as a travelling secretary, Miller met once again Canon Taylor Smith, with whom he had worked at the Universities' Public School Camps. At the annual Keswick Convention that year, Smith spoke to Miller. Towards the end of July Smith asked Miller to go to Freetown as doctor in charge of the Princess Christian Hospital there. It was an emotional meeting. Miller agreed, and on 15 October he arrived in Sierra Leone.[5.]

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1. ibid, page 11.

2. See Constance E. Padwick, Temple Gairdner of Cairo, S.P.C.K., London, 1929.

3. WMA, page 11.

4. "He (Miller) says that he conceived it to be his duty to learn to speak Hausa as that some day he should not be detected, when speaking in the dark, by a native of the country. He was commonly reputed to have achieved that standard of proficiency in Hausa-speaking, and he is probably the only European of whom it could ever truly have been said". E.R.J. Hussey, in the Foreword to WMRP, page 1; W.O. Ajayi, HNM, pp. 398-399.

5. WMA, page 14.

This was an eventful year for Sierra Leone and for the colonial administration. Miller found himself among people who had known both Crowther and Blyden. The political situation was ominous. The native peoples were close to rebellion. This was because of a British tax ruling.[1.] Joseph Chamberlain, the forthright British Colonial Secretary, had ordered the governor, Sir Frederick Cardew, to impose a hut-tax, not only on the citizens of the Colony but also on the tribespeople of the interior. There were few Europeans up country among the people most concerned, the Temne and Mende, and it would have been difficult to enforce the order. Further east British troops had been concentrated to fight the Ashanti. The Governor opposed the order from London, insisting that he was unable to police such an order at that time. Chamberlain replied curtly that he should comply with orders. The rebellion did come, and it was a ferocious affair, with much loss of life and damage to property.

This was the situation in 1898. Miller's stay in Sierra Leone was temporary. He had been chosen for Nigeria. A bout of malaria in Freetown cut short his stay and he returned home to prepare for the task he was to perform for the whole of his active life. The works of explorers such as Clapperton, Barth, Baikie and C.H. Robinson had fired Miller's imagination about Nigeria. Robinson's travels in Hausaland, (as the northern, Muslim as well as pagan, parts of Nigeria were sometimes called), his work on the Hausa

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1. ibid, pp. 15-16.

dictionary and the subsequent setting up of a studentship in Hausa at Cambridge, drew attention to the needs and opportunities for Christian service of the peoples in that part of Africa.[1] From the point of view of Christian mission the area was virgin territory. John Robinson[2] and Wilmot Brooke had failed to penetrate beyond Lokoja, and both died in the field. What these men had failed to do became the task of the pioneer party which began preparations in 1898, leaving England for Tripoli in the autumn of that year for acclimatization and language study. The leader of the party was Bishop Herbert Tugwell.

Miller was aware of the predominantly Islamic character of the area to which he was going. This offered him a challenge. The people, whom he described as Hausas, were themselves travellers, journeying as pilgrims to Mecca on the trans-Saharan routes to north Africa and thence to Arabia, or travelling as traders to the various parts of West Africa, from the coast to the savannah.

In June 1899, the party returned to England to make final preparations for the journey into Hausaland.[3] In December of that year the members of the pioneer party left Liverpool for Lagos, arriving there in Christmas week. The party consisted of five men. The leader was Herbert Tugwell. Two others were also Anglican priests - J.C. Dudley Ryder and A.E. Richardson. J.C. Burgin provided "the

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1. See the Robinson Papers (uncatalogued), U.S.P.G., London.

2. C.H. and J.A. Robinson were brothers. On the problems created for Crowther by the latter, see supra, pp. 110-114.

3. for the general instructions to the Hausa party, see G3/A3/L5, dated 15 December 1899, pp. 164-165.

practical sense" which Miller generously attributed to a hard training in the university of life. Unlike the others Burgin was not a graduate. Miller completed the party and served as doctor.

The party spent a few days in Lagos preparing for the trek to Kano, a journey across some eight hundred miles of difficult terrain.[1.] From Jebba where during the rains the Niger was two miles broad, they had to pass through country which was often hostile.[2.]

Almost everything had to be taken for the journey. For three weeks the party trekked north through towns where C.M.S. mission stations had already been established - Ijebu Ode, Ibadan, Oyo and Oshogbo. They travelled on foot, or on horseback, or, if unwell, in hammocks slung from poles carried by bearers.[3.]

During this trek, Miller claimed that he learnt two important lessons. First, that the incursions of Christian missionaries in non-Christian areas brought great suffering to some who proffered help to missionaries. Second, that the social evils of slavery and oppression were only challenged and eliminated by the liberating influence of the Christian Gospel, backed, where necessary, by the power of the British colonial administration.[4.] This second

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1. This figure is given by Miller, WMA, page 25. On the journey, north, see W.O. Ajayi, HNM, pp. 408-415.

2. Jebba was the place where the Dayspring foundered and sank during Crowther's expedition in 1857; See supra, page 91.

3. WMA, page 21.

4. ibid, page 26.

consideration influenced his attitude not only to the traditional rulers, whose authority was derived, for example, from the Sokoto Caliphate, but also to the new colonial administration under Lugard, a man for whom Miller had a high personal regard.[1.] For Miller the problem was created and sustained by the British insistence that Indirect Rule was the most appropriate form of colonial administration. Miller argued for a more direct intervention - especially where the existing social evils of society were in conflict with the Christian values which the British administrators themselves accepted.

The area in which Miller and his companions intended to work was already feeling the impact of incursions of a different type. The French and the British were intent on annexing large territories, and bringing them under colonial administration. The rulers of the northern emirates acknowledged only one religion - Islam. Islam was the true religion. In defence of its claims, Muslims of the interior had maintained a struggle against the paganism with which they came into contact.

The Muslims opposed all the incursions of European expatriates and their ideas. Who were these infidel invaders, whether administrators, soldiers, traders or missionaries, who presumed to interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic community? Why should they be accorded rights and privileges to expand and consolidate their work as if they were the equals of Muslims? Why should they be allowed to defend the interests of those whom Muslim orthodoxy

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1. See, R. Heussler, The British in Northern Nigeria, Oxford, 1968; HWA, pp. 454-57, 463-65; HNM, page 426.

had decreed pagan, or to seek to eliminate the slave trade? Bida and Ilorin had already fallen to the white man's superior fire-power, however, and within a short period of time Sir Frederick Lugard had begun to establish an administration in the northern territories which provided some security for intrepid pioneers such as Miller, in the name of British colonialism.[1.]

After a trek of three months Tugwell's party reached the walled city of Kano. Their journey had brought them over several hundred miles of difficult territory in response to what they held to be the guidance of God. They entertained high hopes for their work among Muslims and pagans but the speed with which they were to proceed was disappointing. In spite of Lugard's assurances to the native rulers that he had not come as the representative of a country which sought military conquest, and that he wanted to establish a pattern of friendly co-operation by means of treaties, hostility to the British presence remained. The difficulty was that, from the British point of view, there were conditions. There could be no friendship as long as slavery and slave-raiding continued. Lugard required an assurance that the practice would be ended, but the native rulers scorned the idea.[2.]

The Emir of Kano, Aliyu the Great, gave Miller and his companions an unfriendly reception. He refused them permission to start either

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1. See Margery Perham, Lugard: The Years of Authority, 1898-1945, London, 1960, pp. 21-53, pp. 498-499.
On 1 January 1900, the British Government assumed responsibility for the administration of these territories from the Royal Niger Company.

2. For Miller's attitude to slavery in Muslim communities see infra, pp. 339-40.

a school or a dispensary.[1.] This decision was a great disappointment, but in its way, it was in the nature of a deliverance. For three hours the missionaries were confined in a mud and grass hut while the Emir and his advisers discussed their fate. Finally, the Emir ordered them to leave.[2.] The day following that on which the Emir had ordered them to leave was Easter Sunday, 15 April 1900. The celebration of the Eucharist was a particularly poignant moment during which, as Miller subsequently recalled, their joy in the Resurrection was clouded by a feeling of personal failure. Ryder and Richardson were already unwell when they re-loaded their donkeys and set out for Zaria. They expected a similar reception from the Emir of Zaria, who had been unwilling to accommodate them for more than a day or two in the city on their way north, for fear of incurring the wrath of the Emir of Kano. They discovered that the situation had changed in their absence. The hostility of Sokoto (to the north-west), and Kano (to the north), was something the people of Zaria could not ignore, even though Zaria was not far from the British military force under Lugard. Faced with these twin threats the Emir elected to accept the authority of Sokoto. This left Miller's party with little choice. Two of them were ill and they felt unable to retreat further.

> '... we consulted the Emir, and the Bishop and I decided to make the long journey to Sokoto, leaving the invalids in Zaria, and try and obtain permission from the Sultan for some concession, and some place in the Hausa States where we might stay'.[3.]

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1. Seven years later, when the Emir was living in Lokoja as a pensioner of the British Government, Miller met him again, WMRP, page 38; WMA, page 35: "...We have our own (schools) and our children are taught the Holy Qur'ān"; "...our medicine is in the Holy Qur'ān and the name of Allah".

2. ibid, page 35; WMRP, pp. 37-38.

3. WMA, page 36.

There was no need to go to Sokoto. A messenger brought a letter from Colonel Lowry Cole who was not far away - at Girku on the Kaduna river - with a detachment of Hausa and Yoruba soldiers of the West African Frontier Force. Lugard had heard of the difficulties encountered by the five missionaries and had instructed Cole to request Tugwell to place himself and his companions in the Colonel's charge.

Within a few days Claud Ryder was dead, a victim of dysentery. He was buried at Girku. Richardson's health deteriorated after Ryder's death. The evacuation of Richardson was made possible by an order directing the British force to withdraw from Hausaland in order to prepare for the war which had just broken out in Ashanti. Richardson was taken back to Jebba, then to Lagos, and thence back to England. He never returned to Nigeria. This left Tugwell, Burgin and Miller.[1.]

They did not die. After a few days, dosed with quinine, they were active again. During a lull in the rains they walked up a hill to discover a glorious view of the Kaduna river and the countryside beyond. They started to build huts for themselves and even got down to some language study, but Burgin had to leave them to return to base. He too was suffering from persistent illness. For several weeks Miller and Tugwell were left alone, trying to make friendly contacts with the local Muslims and pagans.

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1. WMA, page 38.

On one occasion after midnight they were woken by some villagers with the news that the Emir of Zaria had sent five hired hands to kill Miller and the Bishop. The Emir apparently disapproved of their growing friendship with his people. The killers were already in the village, and the villagers urged the missionaries to leave before it was too late. Both said that they had nothing to fear and that they would not leave. The following day was a Sunday.

> 'We had a short, simple service, parts of the ordinary liturgy, a hymn in Hausa, and a brief address from the Bishop which I translated; and then the benediction - on our would-be murderers! After this we walked out, escorted them to their beautiful horses, gave them the heartiest of handshakes and good-byes, and came back to our frightened villagers, "before whose eyes a notable miracle had been wrought".[1].

Long after this incident Miller was told that on their return to Zaria the five hired killers were reduced to excusing their failure to follow the Emir's instructions by saying, "those men can't be killed". Whatever the immediate explanation of his escape from death at that time may have been, it is clear that Miller saw it as a divine intervention. On this occasion, as on several similar occasions later, Miller fell back on a dictum of Cromwell - that no man is mortal until his work is done. A few weeks after this incident the Emir struck again at the missionaries' camp at Girku. The huts were set on fire, the stores and medical equipment were destroyed. News of this attack reached the Governor at Lokoja. Some weeks later Miller and Tugwell were surprised to see a dishevelled clergyman arriving in their compound. The Rev. J.J. Williams, who had had his own adventures en route arrived to report that the

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1. WMRP, page 44.

relief supplies he had volunteered to bring to Miller had been taken from him by pagan robbers.[1.] A letter from the Governor in Zungeru advised them to leave Zaria territory. They went to Loko on the river Benue, where they were met by two missionary recruits, the Rev. G.P. Bargery, and Hans Vischer.

Within a short space of time Miller was the only survivor of the original pioneer party to the Hausa states which had started out in 1899. Burgin was prostrated by sickness and strain. He had to be sent home. A few days after arriving in Loko, Tugwell left to return to Lagos. It was not until 1907 that he returned to Hausa country, and even then only on a visit. Nor did Miller survive the strain for long. Soon after Burgin's departure Miller had a severe attack of dysentery and fever which required a period of recuperation in England. The first venture to Hausaland had come to an end, but Miller was determined to return.[2.]

At the end of 1901, after a complete recovery, he went back to Loko to work with Bargery and Vischer. Bargery was a most congenial and enthusiastic companion and fellow-countryman. The Swiss, Vischer, was an equally dependable colleague, but within a short period he had to return to Switzerland because of ill-health and the death of his father.

Loko was not a good place to establish a mission station. The climate was bad, and the local people according to Miller, unusually backward. His real aim was the large Hausa states. With this in

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1. WMA, pp. 40-41; WMRP, pp. 46-47.
2. Miller experienced great loneliness and isolation during his career. cf. WMBN, file 1, letter dated 4 February 1900. At the same time he quickly made friends with local Muslims, WMBN, file 1, Diary from Hausaland, entries for 19 October, and 13 November 1900.

mind he addressed a letter to the High Commissioner, Sir Frederick Lugard, who was staying at the time in Lokoja. Lugard replied, inviting Miller to meet him in Lokoja, for a half-hour session. Miller packed a bag, got in an African canoe, and made the journey to Lokoja in three days. His promised half hour with Lugard included breakfast and an hour or two more. The working relationship established between the two men at this meeting blossomed into friendship and mutual respect. Miller's passionate espousal of the cause of African development, and his view of Christian mission in that part of the Muslim world as the best tool Europeans could use to further the spiritual and intellectual emancipation of the native peoples, sometimes brought him into conflict with British colonial policy in the area. Nevertheless his friendship with Lugard gave him direct access to the highest administrative authority, and he was able to press his views vigorously in consequence.

Encouraged by Lugard, Miller and Bargery promptly set out for the north. Their journey was not without incident. They travelled light, in the company of a large caravan, which straggled out for half a mile, protected from pagan ambush by spearmen at front and rear. The protection was not effective. An attack came and several Africans were wounded. Miller's medical knowledge was called on several times.[1] One of his travelling companions on this journey was Abdul Majid, a young Muslim who had joined Miller after completing the hajj. Disappointed by what he had seen during

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1. WMA, page 44. From the outset Miller felt like a man launched into "the utter deadliness", and the "paralysing influence" of "Mohammedanism", WMBN, file 1, Circular Letter, dated 2 September, 1902.

the course of his long journey to and from Mecca, Abdul Majid had come to express an interest in Christianity - an interest quickened by Miller's sponsorship. The young man had been in England during Miller's recuperation and had rejoined him on this journey, "still a Muslim, but already half-way towards faith in Christ".[1.] Contacts with this young Muslim, who eventually became a Christian, helped Miller to formulate his distinctive attitude to Islam in an especially concrete way. The book which Miller wrote to express this attitude will be considered later.[2.]

At the end of this eventful journey Miller arrived once again in Zaria. The Emir was unexpectedly friendly after the incidents at Girku. Miller and Bargery were given accommodation in the house of the Sarkin Makera, the chief of the blacksmiths,[3.] who was not only a staunch friend to Miller, but also in the confidence of the Emir Kwasau. This friendly reception concealed a growing danger. Opposition to British designs in the country was developing, and it brought tension to the existing relationships between the emirates and the central authority in Sokoto, from which they derived - at least in theory - a delegated autonomy. Zaria was besieged by a combined Muslim force representing the interests of Sokoto, Kano and Kontagora. It is not easy to see why Zaria should have been singled out for this special attention. Some reasons have been given, such as the failure of Kwasau to pay taxes to the

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1. WMRP, page 70; See infra, page 300.

2. W.R.S. Miller, The Coiners, The Highway Press, CMS London, 1938, (hereafter WMC); see infra, pp. 299-316.

3. In the Hausa cities, such as Zaria and Kano there were powerful trade-guilds, each wielding considerable political influence - rather like trades unions. The chief of each guild enjoyed considerable prestige.

Sultan of Sokoto and the failure to deliver an adequate number of slaves. These and other reasons were adduced to detail the insubordination of the Emir of Zaria. It could have been the case, however, that the northern rulers saw an Achilles heel in Zaria - situated at a place of great strategic importance on the southern flank of Hausaland, with a long history of contacts with the non-Muslim south, and vulnerable to the preliminary forays of British colonialism. An attack on Zaria by Muslim forces might have been seen as a defence of their sphere of influence against British intentions. For his part, the Emir of Zaria was unwilling to declare for the Muslim cause lest Lugard's supposedly superior forces gained the ascendancy. But he could not side openly with Lugard until the latter had clearly shown his hand.

Zaria was besieged by a force of some ten thousand soldiers under Nagwamachi, Emir of Kontagora and nephew of the Sultan of Sokoto. His tactics stopped short of frontal attack. Instead he ordered a succession of incursions against Zarian villages, contrary to Muslim law, and waylaid travellers. The defence of Zaria itself was aided by the thick baked mud wall which encircled the thirteen mile perimeter of the city. Miller and Bargery were informed that Nagwamachi intended to execute them first as soon as the city fell. The Emir of Zaria appealed to Lugard for help. For days there was no news.

George Abadie, a British political officer arrived,[1] on instructions from Lugard, with Major Porter and his detachment of troops,

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1. WMRP, page 77.

having taken Nagwamachi at a village called Kwaya.[1.] The Emir of Kontagora was held in chains. Abadie left with his prisoner the following day for Zungeru.[2.] Miller returned to Zaria. The city had been saved by prompt British action. Kwasau agreed to allow Miller to return to Girku to re-commence work there. For the next four years Girku remained Miller's headquarters. Nagwamachi was subsequently freed by the British authorities and sent back to Kontagora.

During the time that Miller was back in Girku, the British were consolidating their hold on the northern provinces. This incursion of alien control did not make Miller's work any easier. He worked hard to overcome local hostility, seeking to gain the confidence of the people slowly by means of his medical work. At this time he was of the opinion that the primary task was educational not medical, and decided - mistakenly as it turned out - to keep "a dispensary as a side show".[3.] He was the driving force. Colleagues came and went, some reduced by tropical diseases, some by the climate and some by the sheer difficulty of presenting the Gospel to Muslims and pagans. Miller was not to be deflected by difficulties, and his constitution was robust. The new Emir of Zaria, Aliyu, gave Miller permission to work in Zaria. The British authorities raised no objection. He was joined there by W.A. Thompson, a West Indian, who worked with him for many years.

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1. ibid, pp. 78-79; WMA, page 46.

2. Abadie's career in Nigeria was short. He died a few years after these incidents, in 1912.

3. WMA, page 48.

Already, during the lull at Girku, Miller had been working hard studying Hausa. He had begun a Hausa translation of the Bible, helped by a number of native speakers with whom he had developed close links of friendship.[1.] Like many others in similar situations he had to take responsibility for a range of projects for which he had no specialist training. New building projects and educational ventures taxed his ingenuity. In all of this he saw that mastery of Hausa was the key to communication and he came to speak the language fluently. In addition he had to tackle the various aspects of administrative work, first within the mission itself and with the parent society in London, and then with the British colonial authorities who were not as enthusiastic about the presence of Christian missionaries in Hausaland as Miller.

The number of converts to Christianity in Zaria was small. Open conversion was not easy in a tightly-knit Muslim society. The Christians met regularly for prayer and worship. Their numbers were increased by a steady succession of liberally-minded Muslims who attended Sunday services out of curiosity, interest and a desire to enter into discussion. For several years this process of consolidation went on. In 1912 Miller went on a long furlough, spending most of it on his Hausa translation of the Bible. Early in 1913 he was back in Zaria supervising the work of the mission. There was a constant flow of enquirers.[2.]

Miller had to clear up much local misunderstanding about European culture and religion. The truth of the matter had, in his

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1. WMRP, pp. 81-82. His translation was not completed until 1932.
2. WMA, page 50.

view, been filtered through ignorance and Islamic prejudice. Muslims isolated in the remote fastness of Northern Nigeria at that time retained some curious notions about their new colonizers.

> 'We are not supposed to live on land but in the sea, with bodies like mermaids'. Children are not born to us but separately created at mature age: we come out from the sea to explore and trade and then return. We are said to believe in a Trinity of Father, Mother and Son. We can neither read nor write but only pretend to do so, making marks on paper which have no significance'.[1.]

The work which had been begun in Zaria in 1905 was to become Miller's life-work. For the next twenty-four years Zaria was the headquarters of the C.M.S., Hausa Mission.[2.] From this base the work was extended and new stations were established to serve both Muslim and pagan groups over a wide distance. One of the most interesting contacts outside Zaria was made as a result of the visit made to Miller by two young Hausas. The story of this visit, and the events which followed it, will be given more detailed scrutiny in a later section of the present work, not only because it sheds light on Miller's attitude to Islam and to Muslims in a situation which may justifiably be called unique in the history of Christian missionary endeavour in the Muslim parts of Nigeria, but also because in the course of the present programme of research some significant new information has emerged which will help in an understanding of the events which took place.[3.]

The years from 1913 to 1925 saw a growth of the educational work of the mission. From a small and uncertain start, Miller's school

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1. ibid, page 51.

2. On the unremitting toil of Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria, see CMS G3/A9/01, Cambridge University Missionary Party Quarterly Notes, no. 3, July, 1905; cf. Ajayi, HNM, page 528.

3. See infra, pp. 317-331; and Appendix B, pp. 390-392.

in Zaria soon grew to forty-five boarders, including some girls. Co-education was an innovation in that part of the world. Numbers of day pupils also attended.[1.] Distinguished visitors such as Dr. Jesse Jones, Dr. Wilkie, and Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey - of the Phelps-Stokes Education Commission, commended the educational work which Miller was doing. His efforts in Zaria were brought by these observers to the attention of others in different parts of the country. His was a model which could be copied. This took place in 1920. Five years later, the Rev. A.G. Fraser of Achimota College in the Gold Coast (Ghana) visited Zaria and encouraged Miller to develop this aspect of work as a service to the people of Nigeria.

Between 1926 and 1929 some new missionaries arrived in Zaria. From the beginning Miller had attempted to remain in close contact with the people he came to serve. This had been more difficult than may at first appear. The British policy of Indirect Rule had been designed to compensate for an inability on Britain's part to provide sufficient resources of manpower and finance for a complete programme of British supervision, by employing the existing structure of native administration to control the course of daily life. This meant delegating considerable powers to the various Emirs, who - once appointed (after the approval of the colonial authority), exercised these powers in accordance with Islamic precept and practice. As elsewhere in the Muslim world, both then and now, the presence of Christian missionaries, whose activities

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1. Miller felt obliged to tackle the unimaginative schooling of the traditional type, which he described as "a mere repetition of the Koran". See W.O. Ajayi, HNM, page 432.

may be presumed to include the seducing of Muslims from the true faith (Islam) to a false faith (Christianity), was incompatible with Muslim orthodoxy. The British government adopted a pragmatic line, seeking to maintain law and order in a way which would not alienate the traditional way of life of the majority of the indigenous people. Miller's presence in Zaria was a testimony to the unobtrusive but real authority vested in the Governors and backed by British power. Without that he would have been hard pressed to hold his position. The foothold he had gained within the limits of the Muslim city of Zaria was, however, not solely the result of British administrative pressure. His individual concern for Muslims, repeatedly expressed in medical and educational care had made him persona grata. But in general, British policy supported the separation of Muslims in their own communities from the small non-Muslim groups.

Among the new arrivals between 1926 and 1929 were several members of "the Hausa Band". They were gifted and enthusiastic. They were eager to expand the work begun by Miller and came to feel that the limited space and scope offered to them by the existing privileged site in Zaria was insufficient for the necessary outreach. Miller began to experience what Crowther had suffered during the close of his career when a group of British missionaries, zealous for the extension of evangelism had challenged his leadership and policy. He felt that the new arrivals - who included Guy Bullen[1.] and M.A. C. (Max) Warren[2.] - did not sufficiently appreciate the work which

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1. See Guy Bullen: by His Friends, The Highway Press, 1938, pp. 51-98.

2. See supra, page 263, footnote 1.

had been done, or the manner of its doing.[1.]

With the approval of the home committee of the Church Missionary Society, but with a degree of reluctance he never fully overcame, Miller agreed to an arrangement which combined a recognition of the Mission's continuing importance in the area with an acceptance of the Government's growing insistence that segregation - that is, of non-Muslims and Muslims - was essential if indirect rule was to succeed. Miller and his companions had to give up the site and the complex of buildings they had constructed, before moving to a new site <u>outside</u> the city.[2.] The missionaries were compensated for their loss. On the new, more spacious plot, they erected a school, a hospital and several dwelling houses in due course, but the principle of Christian presence <u>within</u> the Muslim community had - in Miller's view - been effectively, and needlessly, compromised. The move took place in 1929.

The new site, a plot of ground amounting to a square mile, was three miles away from the city. The daily contact with Muslims, who were in the habit of dropping in for casual, though sometimes lengthy, discussions was replaced by what Miller termed a "more institutional" work.[3.] That this period of his life was difficult and painful there can be little doubt. He does not dwell on the detail in anything he wrote for publication. By this time he was two generations ahead of his youngest expatriate associates. His ideas did not command the support which he felt his pioneering

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1. <u>WMRP</u>, pp. 215-216.

2. The alien quarter outside a Muslim town was known in Hausa as the <u>Sabon Gari</u>.

3. <u>WMA</u>, page 62.

activity and experience merited. The work of the mission took a new turn. To some extent the isolation of the mission site cut the direct link with the city. Missionaries were reluctant to take the constant trek to and from Zaria. People from the city needed a special reason to go to the mission. To this extent Miller was right, for the work at the new site developed in rather specialized and institutional ways. The school became a somewhat élitist community, attracting children from parents who were able to pay for the education provided. Miller did not dispute that this work was important, but it was different from what he wanted. This led to differences of opinion within the Christian community. Miller felt that his leadership was being questioned, and even that his presence was uncongenial to some of his associates. In his autobiographical sketch he draws a veil over these disagreements, permitting himself only the tersest of links between what he considered to be his major life's work in Zaria, and his labours in another place.

'So I was asked to start work in Kano'.[1.]

After four months at the new site near Zaria, Miller went to Kano. It was August 1929. Freed from the responsibility of administration, of policy-making, and the exercise of the difficult art of diplomacy in bringing out the best from the different talents and opinions of his colleagues, Miller was able to devote himself in Kano to a more personal ministry. With a small team of helpers he built up the small Christian community in the city and completed the Hausa translation of the Bible, begun in 1899. He was fifty-

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1. ibid, page 62.

seven years old. It is a tribute to his resilience that he chose to start again, in a new location, and in the face of constraints placed upon his activity by government policy.

> 'It was not easy ... to start work in a new centre with no freedom, as before, to develop one's own work and plans. In Kano there was no possibility that the Government would allow a missionary to settle and do even the quietest work however unostentatious, in the city. Neither would the Emir agree, and his word was final. So I chose a site not far from the European commercial quarter and about a mile from the nearest gate to the city... Visiting in the city was practically impossible, although I tried in every way to circumvent the difficulties. My every movement was watched by servants of the Emir and the Mallams who spied on me. To call on a Moslem in his home was to expose him to the risk of serious persecution, and I soon realized with some added bitterness what a glorious position had been thrown away in Zaria and what a special gift of God had been my compound in the heart of that city'.[1.]

The work that Miller began was interesting but only a pale reflection of the vision he had once had for the church in the Muslim north. For the limited scale of the new enterprise there was no opposition from either the British administration or the Emir of Kano. The work was too localised and constricted to give offence. This was a sign for Miller that it was falling short of what was required. Still outside the city, but this time within a mile from the gates, his two-acre compound was developed. A church was built from contributions made by Africans themselves.

> 'When completed the Resident,[2.] a most friendly person, and Bishop Smith who happened to be visiting Kano at the time, came and the church was opened with quite a large congregation present, some Christians, several Moslems also'.[3.]

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1. WMA, pp. 62-63.
2. H.O. Lindsell.
3. WMA, page 63.

At this service Miller conducted the worship and preached in Hausa. Among the congregation were some African converts. In spite of this promising start it is clear that Miller was dissatisfied. Nothing indicates this more clearly than his own laconic summary of the situation at that time. "A steady quiet work grew up - but I was never happy".[1.]

Reflecting on his experiences in Kano, Miller reveals the reasons for his disquiet. He felt that a great opportunity was being lost for the strengthening of missionary work and the building up of the church. Kano itself was the prize. It was the centre for a teeming Muslim population of two and a half million souls. It was a city with a long history. Its perimeter walls, some fifteen miles long, encircled a settlement and a culture built up by, and reserved for, Muslims. Christianity had made no impact on this closed community. Yet Miller held that a sustained Christian outreach could achieve a significant break-through.

The evangelical zeal of Miller's vision may have clouded his view of anything good in this Muslim fastness. Others had come to the north burning with passion to preach the gospel of Christ. Frustrated by the lack of response and debilitated by sickness they had returned to Europe.[2.] It was not so with Miller. The sight of great human need, of blatant greed and of brutalized relationships between the various groups in society, not to speak of the cruelty meted out to animals, released in him a spring of compassion.[3.]

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1. ibid, page 63.
2. see, for example, WMRP, page 141.
3. ibid, page 218.

In 1931 Miller returned to England with the completed manuscript of the Hausa Bible. He delivered it to the printers. In 1932 he received the last page-proofs, and on 12 October that year received from the British and Foreign Bible Society, a copy of the published Hausa text signed by Dr. F. Kilgour. During this visit to England Miller launched two of his young African friends on medical careers by sending them to study at the University of Birmingham.[1.]

With the publication of the Hausa Bible, Miller felt that there was little for him left to do in the mission field. He considered resigning from the Church Missionary Society, but returned to Kano for two more short tours of service. Early in 1935, however, he felt that the work in Kano was sufficiently well established for him to be able to withdraw. He resigned and returned to England, but with the conviction that what had been achieved in Kano went not nearly so deep as the work he had been able to build up over so many years in Zaria. Back in England he settled down to write his memoirs, published by the Church Missionary Society in 1936 with the title, Reflections of a Pioneer. The Epilogue to this book was premature. It was not so easy for him to cut his links with Hausaland. At the time he wrote,

> 'Past is the weariness from heat, the sleepless nights, and often grilling days. Remains the heartache for work unfinished, friendships severed, though never lost; and the unquenchable longing to see the fruition of all to which life was dedicated, but which still seems so distant'.[2.]

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1. This was made possible by the generosity of several English friends, as well as the financial contribution of Miller himself. The two students, Musa Benson and Baran Dikko, qualified as doctors and returned to Africa. Both were Christians.

2. WMRP, pp. 221-222.

These sentiments were too strong for him. He found retirement, even amid the beautiful scenery of England's south-west corner, far too dull and uncongenial. The deputation work he carried out for the Church Missionary Society, served only to remind him of the thirty-five years he had spent in Africa. He was over sixty, but still vigorous. But he was lonely. He decided to return to Kano, as a private citizen, without the official support or blessing of the Society under whose auspices he had first set out. His sister Ethel was on furlough in England at the time but planning to return to her small home in Kano in six months' time. It was to this house that Miller returned at the age of sixty-seven, during the period that his sister was on leave in 1939. The comparison with his first arrival in the city was painful.

> 'I went straight to Kano from Lagos by train, everything in this journey being in as complete contrast as possible from my first one in 1900. That was full of the spice of enterprise, hardship, danger, freedom, good companions, the novelty of a new outlook on life, a work to begin and to fight through to success - and with youth above all!
>
> ... in 1939 I was alone, attached to nothing, my life work nearly done, ... and with no prospects or work in front of me, except that which every servant of Jesus Christ always has. I committed my way and the remaining years of my life and service to the Master who never got tired of His servants or "retired" them when they still had strength and talents for his work'.[1.]

Miller spent the six months of his sister's absence renewing contacts. The problem of where he was to live when his sister returned to Kano was solved by an old friend and chess opponent, Guy Betts. Betts was employed by the British Bank of West Africa.

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1. WMA, page 66.

After a period as Assistant Manager at Jos Betts went to Kano on a visit, met the recently returned Miller, and invited him to go to Jos to stay as long as he wished. Jos is situated in plateau country and offers one of the most pleasant areas for habitation in the whole of Nigeria.[1.]

Betts gave Miller the use of the small rest house near the Bank. For eighteen months Miller lived there, extending his circle of friends, travelling extensively in the plateau region, and enjoying the social life which centred on the European club in Jos. In Zaria and Kano he had been too busy to mix freely with the expatriate community of administrators, commercial managers, and other non-missionary groups. In Jos he became well-known to them. This was the period of the "phoney war" in Europe. Miller soon found a use for his linguistic talent. He began to teach Hausa to enthusiastic groups of individuals, who realised that if they were to command units of predominantly Hausa-speaking troops against forces organised in neighbouring Vichy-influenced French colonies, they would have to learn the language quickly. Miller had been introduced to Colonel and Mrs. Boyes, and had already started to give them both lessons in Hausa.[2.] Boyes was an Engineer who had served in the 1914-18 War, and who had now been given the task of recruiting and training a Company of soldiers for war service. He

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1. Since independence in 1960 the area has been developed for tourists. At night-time the temperature can fall low enough to make it necessary for comfort to heat houses, a rare experience for those who spend their working lives lower down in the heat of the tropical rain forest or the Savannah. Cattle-ranching has also been developed in the region.

2. Miller was always an enthusiastic teacher. Earlier in his career he had offered to teach the Roman script to the mallams in Zaria, cf. W.O. Ajayi, HNM, pp. 450-451.

had already spent several years on the Plateau. His knowledge of Hausa was adequate but he was more than willing to receive instruction from Miller, not only for his own benefit, but as an example to his men.

In the event, French Equatorial Africa declared for the Allies against Germany, so the threat to a vulnerable flank of Nigeria was averted. Further down the west coast, places like Freetown and Lagos became important strategic supply points on the naval routes from Britain to the Far East. Nigerian troops were deployed elsewhere, particularly in the Asian theatre, but wherever they served, their officers and N.C.O.'s had to learn Hausa. Miller had a new and unexpected part to play in this war effort.

Miller had spent far longer than he anticipated in Betts' rest house. Now he wanted a place of his own. Another friend, a barrister called Gosling, offered him a vacant bungalow about seven miles from Jos. It needed a great deal of repair-work, but the price was such that he could afford it. It became his home for the rest of his life. It was situated in a pleasant spot near a stream on which a pair of crown birds nested each year. Crown Bird Creek became the name of the place. Miller maintained that the views were reminiscent of the Tor-dominated landscape of Devon.

To the end of his life Miller continued to take great interest in the social, political and economic future of Nigeria. As a doctor he remained interested in the fight against the twin scourges of trypanosomiasis and leprosy. As a Christian and a missionary he approved of the fact that one of the lasting contributions to the

development of the country was in the medical field. To some extent this compensated for the comparative failure of his own effort as an evangelist among the Muslim people of the North. Miller could see the problems, the effects of tribal differences and rivalries, the extent of illiteracy, the conflict of religions, the tensions which would result from the transfer of administrative control from Britain, and the failures of British colonial policy to train indigenous public servants in sufficient numbers and in sufficient time before independence. But he was not pessimistic about the country's future. His conviction remained that what he called "English Christians" should deny themselves and make every effort to welcome, train and support Nigerians who, more than ever before, would require higher education in Britain to equip them to serve their own people. And the opportunities for individual Christians to serve the new nation in many specialist fields would not diminish. The "Apostle of the Hausa people"[1.] died in the country of his adoption in August 1952, just over eight years before Nigeria achieved independence.

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1. This striking phrase is taken from the obituary notice printed in the Times, on 27 August 1952; see also the Hon. Eyo Ita, "Dr. Walter Miller - Our Northern Star", WMBN, file Z2, Nigeria Review, Sept. 1952 (i) vol. viii, no. 514, page 2; and M.A.C. Warren, Northern Nigeria News Sheet, November 1952.

8. Miller's Attitude to Islam.

(a) The Coiners.[1]

The idea for writing this story came to Miller when he was still active in Northern Nigeria. It was intended as a tract for the times, adapted to the needs of the local people, and as an instrument in the service of mission. In its original form it appeared in Hausa. Miller's command and skilful use of the language was remarkable. It was only at a later date that the story was considered to hold anything of interest to European readers. In the version published in 1938 there is a translation, expanded here and there for English readers to whom the domestic Hausa situation and allusions would mean little if not explained, but yet a translation in which much of the 'African' material of the original has been omitted.[2]

The book carries the sub-title, 'A Story of Africa'. The author insists that his story is drawn from life, and that the characters - with a single exception - are composite portraits. But it is the single exception who gives the story its central character, whose spiritual pilgrimage epitomises Miller's constant struggle to bring Muslims face to face with Christ. The central character is Ali who is based upon Miller's friend Abdul Majid.[3]

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1. The Highway Press, London, 1938, hereafter WMC.
2. Miller apologises for cutting down the original work "by nearly a half". WMC, page 3.
3. See supra, page 282.

Abdul Majid was a Hausa who had set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca, walking from Katsina to Tripoli, and intending to continue on the hajj. For several weeks he stayed with Miller before leaving to complete the pilgrimage. He was a devout Muslim, and fourteen years old. Miller could not deflect him from his intention to go to Mecca, but the two kept in touch so that subsequently during the course of Miller's first furlough in England, the boy joined him there. At the end of that furlough Miller and the boy went back to Nigeria together. Abdul Majid was still a Muslim, but "already half-way towards faith in Christ".[1] Miller reveals his hand here. If he could be the instrument by means of which even a single devout Muslim could become a Christian, then this would be enough to point a way for others to follow. Abdul Majid was to be the first-fruits, an exemplary figure, a special symbol of God's grace.

Miller was not a gifted literary figure and it is idle to pretend that The Coiners is anything other than a spirited tale, told in a lively style, to illustrate a particular point. At the same time it is a story worth considering for the light it sheds on Miller's own attitude to Islam and to an individual Muslim. Miller became a rather austere and dominating figure, confident in his own abilities, and sufficiently resilient to survive not only the rigours of the Nigerian climate, but also the criticisms of his expatriate missionary and administrative compatriots. He did not relish isolation. He suffered the criticisms which were levelled

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1. WMRP, page 70.

at him with a measure of stoicism. There was a single-mindedness which sustained him throughout. In addition, he was granted a longevity which enabled him to outlive most of his critics. He was a Victorian Englishman, and the significant point about his attitude to Islam, as evidenced in The Coiners, is that beneath the patronising exterior of the man there was a genuine regard for the individual Muslim. A Muslim who became a Christian, who apostatised, was cut off from the Muslim community (umma), with all that that entailed. There was also an element of personal danger in that converts knew that they ran the risk of dying at the hands of other Muslims who viewed conversion to Christianity as a betrayal deserving death. The questions, posed by Miller, both in Nigeria and in Europe, were these; How far are Christian communities able and willing to accept converts from Islam? To what extent are Christians ready to provide the social and economic support which converts need following their exclusion from the umma?

The story of The Coiners begins in Zaria, where Miller established the first C.M.S. mission station in Hausaland. Abdul Karim,[1.] his wife Lami, and their two sons, Iro and Ali are members of the Muslim community there. The father and the younger son Ali are preparing to join the group of pilgrims about to leave for Mecca. Miller makes his first point about the social customs of Islam.

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1. In a letter to Henry Venn, Blyden describes a meeting with some Muslims in Freetown. "They said that they looked upon me as chosen of God and they would call me Mukhtar - the chosen one. The name given to me by the Mohammedans in the interior is Abd-al-Kerim". Letter dated 6 September 1871, SLB, page 89.

> 'In silence Lami brought in the food; in silence she set it before her husband and the two boys, and in silence she went to the women's quarters to eat her own'.[1]

The father intends to take the younger son, Ali, with him to Mecca, leaving wife and elder son at home. This division in the Muslim family is a major theme in the story. The father's religious obligations as a Muslim blind him to his responsibilities to the family.

> '...It did not occur to him that a religious act that was only possible at the cost of breaking his wife's heart might not be acceptable to God'.[2]

Miller briefly describes the separation of the family, as father and Ali leave Zaria for Mecca. He says nothing of the long journey to the holy city, and does little more than record the fact that the pilgrims perform the hajj. The climax of piety in the life of any Muslim becomes a turning point in the life of Ali, whose questionings about Islam reflect Miller's own attitude.

Miller spends little time describing for his readers the details of the hajj in, and near, Mecca. Doubts are already beginning to raise questions about the truth of Islam in the minds of Ali and his father. Miller is not specific about the misdeeds of some of the pilgrims.

> '"I suppose there are bad Moslems as well as good", thought Ali, "but it is a shame that they should be here - in the holy city"'.[3]

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1. WMC, pp. 5-6.
2. ibid, pp. 6-7.
3. WMC, page 8.

But Miller was not a novelist. He was an apologist. What interested him were the questionings which arose in the mind of a young Muslim like Ali. He turns to an examination of these questionings, set in the form of a dialogue between father and son, after indicating in a few deft strokes that Ali had attempted to understand and to study his own faith seriously.

> 'The two pilgrims had passed through Egypt on their return journey, and had stayed for two years while Ali attended El Azhar, the Moslem University of Cairo'.[1].

Six years after leaving the city of Zaria by the Doka Gate, Ali and his father had reached the rest house at Maiduguri on their way home. Abdul Karim was seriously ill. In his delirium he spoke of the evil done by some who called themselves Muslims. There was another factor, however. In moments of lucidity he quoted some words, but could not recall their origin.

> 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise'.[2].

Ali tries to comfort his father by saying that they have performed the hajj conscientiously, as required, that Allah will give them their just reward, and that although Islam may be compromised by the actions of a few bad Muslims, it can not be finally repudiated in this way. Abdul Karim is not so sure. The last words which Miller puts into the mouth of the dying man are those of Jesus,

> 'Come unto me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest'.[3].

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1. ibid, page 10.
2. Psalm li, 17.
3. St. Matthew xi, 28; cf. St. John v, 40.

This was part of Miller's own credo, and it was what he had to offer, and to share, with Muslims. When Abdul Karim died, without seeing his family again, Ali buried him according to Muslim custom. He looked for his father's Qur'ān, but failed to find it. Instead he came across another book which his father had kept. In it was a piece of paper on which were written the words of the text from Matthew just quoted. The book was the New Testament. Ali put this book aside for future reading. He decided not to return immediately to Zaria, but to visit Bauchi, to see his father's friend Malam Saidu. In the years that had passed since father and son had left Zaria for the hajj, Malam Saidu had become a judge. When Ali arrived in Bauchi he learned that his father's friend had gone to the mosque for Friday prayer. On his return Saidu undertook to provide hospitality for the young son of his deceased friend. Ali bathed, and went to sleep in the room provided. When he awoke he went to find his host, who was in conversation with a stranger. Malam Saidu introduced Ali to Malam Mustapha, who began to question Ali about his journey. The exchange of conversation provides the story with a dynamic new turn.

> '"And now," went on Mustapha, "what is the news from the East? Did you visit Istambul?"
>
> "No. We came back through Egypt, but had no chance of seeing Istambul. One can only do that journey now if one has a great deal of money".
>
> "And that", broke in Mustapha angrily, "as I have been saying to Malam Saidu, is the work of those damned infidels, the Ingilis! Is it not so? May the curse of Allah fall on them, for they bring trouble wherever they go!"

"Malam", said Ali rather hotly, "we have a saying that 'he who travels not is as a fish in a well, seeing nothing and understanding nothing'. It is the British, the Ingilis as we say, who have made the journey safer for the followers of the Prophet, and that though they themselves do not follow him. Wherever the hand of Britain reaches, there gradually cease plague, disease, and the one-time horrors of the way. And so, I say, and many a Hausa with me will say: 'May Allah bless the Ingilis for the help and kindness they have given to us His pilgrims'".

"May the curse of Allah blast them! Do you know all things because you have done the hadj? What true follower of the Prophet are you, that you would bless his enemies?"

Ali was startled at the fury in the face of Mustapha and at the bitter words which passed from his lips.

Turning to the Judge, Mustapha went on: "You O Malam Saidu, are known everywhere as a true Moslem; but it would not do for a breath of suspicion to fall on one of your household!"[1].

This passage has much to tell the student about Miller's attitude to Islam, and to Muslims. To begin with, it shows that Miller was aware of the cost of Christian discipleship for anyone reared in a Muslim community. Mustapha's warning extends not only to Ali - whose answer gives offence to Muslim susceptibilities because of its defence of the indefensible - but also to Saidu, who, as a true Muslim, must not tolerate the expression of anti-Muslim sentiments, even from one who enjoys the protection of his hospitality. Miller did not fabricate this threat. He drew attention to one aspect of the Christian/Muslim encounter which can too easily be overlooked in the pursuit of a naive spiritual détente.

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1. WMC, pp. 15-16.

In the passage quoted above, Miller is addressing a wider audience, and his treatment of the episode reveals his talent for vigorous apologetic. Setting aside the impropriety with which the young man addresses his elder (even granted that Ali has the status of one who has performed the hajj) it is clear that the answer he gives is cast in the form of an argumentum ad homines. And the answer is more skiful than may at first appear. Admittedly it contains the defence of British intervention and administration which the reader might expect of a Victorian such as Miller. But Ali is the mouthpiece of Miller in another, more subtle, and perhaps unexpected way. Ali makes the point that the British, i.e., those classified collectively as "Christians" in common parlance, had adopted policies such as to enable those who professed Islam to become better Muslims. But for British protection, Muslims would have found it more difficult to perform their obligatory religious duties. Here one is concerned less with a criticism of the facts of the situation, and more with the insight afforded by this exchange into Miller's apologetic tactics. Without making the point in as many words, Miller conveys the impression that there may be some believers (not Muslims) for whom the injunction to bless enemies is a matter of religious duty. This impression is confirmed, the more clear it becomes that the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount informs Miller's attitude.

The departure of Mustapha heralds an exchange between Ali and Saidu in which the latter expressed his regard and continuing support for the former by offering him a post as an assessor in

the local Law Court. The Muslim ruler of the province and the British Resident have no objection to this suggestion. Ali begins work the following day.

The story proceeds at a fast pace, with the characters now clearly established in two opposing camps of good and evil. Miller does not identify the good as Christians, or the evil as Muslims. The story would have retained little interest had that been the case. Nevertheless evil is personified in the character of Mustapha, who represents a degree of Muslim intransigence and opposition, which Miller identified as the chief stumbling block for Christian missionaries. In the story the scene is set for the ensuing drama in which Mustapha uses all the means available to punish any Muslims who show an interest in Christianity. And it is a Christian missionary - the picture is in fact drawn from Miller's own life - who is the agent through whom even the estimable young hajji, Ali, is led astray. Ali says,

> 'In Cairo I had a friend who was an Englishman. He was good to me and helped me very much. We often talked together of many things, but chiefly of religion'.[1].

A case of counterfeit money was brought to the attention of the authorities. Dumma, the young daughter of Malam Saidu had been given two counterfeit coins in the market. This happened during the period of Ramadan. Ali, as a legal assessor, took steps to discover the coiners and bring them to justice. There were suspects - strangers - whose activities were closely watched. Ali concentrates

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1. WMC, page 18; Miller spent some time in Cairo, where inter alia, he studied Arabic, with Temple Gairdner, one of the best Arabists of his day. Miller's command of Hausa was legendary, but he failed to master Arabic.

his detective work on the three prime suspects, a Hausa man aged between twenty-five and thirty, an older man about forty, and an old woman, described as "some kind of pagan".[1] Their house was watched. Their activity suggested that they were preparing to flee the city, and that a further ruse was being practised. The three had never been seen together. Ali suspected that the older man was also doubling as the old woman. The police arrested the younger male Hausa suspect. The older man/woman disappeared. In court the following day Ali discovered that the suspect was his own brother Iro, whom he had not seen for six years.

Ali, troubled to know how his brother had fallen into bad company, addressed a letter to him in the prison, sending it by a messenger just a few days before the feast of _'id-al-fitr_.

> 'This letter is from the hand of your brother Ali, with love and salutations. It is to inform you that I have returned from the Hadj and am an assessor in the criminal court here. After the feast you will be brought before the judge. Tell him everything without lying and without fear, and I will do all I can to get you an easy sentence ...'[2].

The old woman entrusted with the letter is told to deliver it to no one but Iro.

Questioned by another visitor about his experiences on the _hajj_, Ali was non-committal. He rehearsed some of the social changes he had seen further east, and attributed the increasing emancipation of women there to the disgust felt by the people for oppressive Turkish domination. Miller himself was of the opinion that under

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1. _ibid_, page 25.
2. _ibid_, page 34.

Islam, personal freedoms were inevitably restricted, and that the Christian gospel was a social gospel, by means of which the legitimate aspirations of people for independence and political expression could best be realised.[1.]

> 'Nothing is prohibited to women now - arts and crafts and all professions are open to them. It is only the old people and those conservatively minded who feel sore about the changes'.[2.]

Ali developed his theme, and referred to his experiences as a student at Al Azhar in Cairo.

> 'I sat day by day at the feet of the great Muhammad Abdu,[3.] and learned the secrets of our faith. I read our sacred books as well as the Koran. I followed the rules of prayer as set out by the Prophet, on him be peace! I had acquired merit by the Hadj. I thought I was satisfied; I made myself think I was. But always there was a sense of disappointment'.[4.]

This was the critical point in the story of Ali, from Miller's point of view. Ali's experience of Islam in the wider world had certainly confirmed that there were bad Muslims as well as good, but this was not the decisive factor in his dis-satisfaction. For Ali, as for Miller, the critical questions were clustered round the claims of Islam to be the religion which could bring peace

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1. See supra, page 268.

2. WMC, page 35.

3. cf. Muhammad Abduh, The Theology of Unity, translated from the Arabic by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg, Allen and Unwin, 1966; cf. Lord Cromer, Modern Egypt, Macmillan, 1908, vol. 2, pp. 179-180.

4. WMC, page 36.

and freedom to the individual; to be the religion which made a living reality out of the concept of umma; and to be a religion which was capable of inner reform as the years passed.[1.]

To add to Ali's discomfiture, he had seen something of what it meant to be a Christian, not only in the life and friendship of an Englishman, but in the lives of Egyptian Christians.[2.] Christianity was more than a religion for Europeans. Ali had read in the book of the Christians many times. At this point it is revealed that the visitor from Zaria, Malam Idi,[3.] is himself a Christian, who tells his hearers,

> '"...what I am telling you about (i.e. his new life in Christ), is not a question of one prophet or another, of one book or another, or of one religion or another; it is a matter of life and death. The gift of God is life for ever in Jesus Christ. I have obtained this gift"'.[4.]

This evening conversation was interrupted by a fire which set Saidu's house ablaze. Those inside escaped, but with some difficulty. Had the fire been started deliberately?

The trial of Iro brought the defence that the crime of counterfeiting must be the work of someone from another tribe, because "the making of false money is not a thing known to the Hausas".[5.]

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1. cf. Lord Cromer, op.cit., pp. 201-227, in which the author discusses from his own experience in Egypt (1883-1907), the conservatism, not only of Muslims, but also the Copts.

2. WMC, page 37.

3. See infra, page 390, Appendix B.

4. WMC, page 38; Miller could point to the young Christian community at Zaria to support the claim that Muslims were already turning to Christ. See supra, page 286.

5. ibid, page 40.

He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. The family tie between Ali and Iro was known to no-one until Ali revealed it to Saidu. This information was heard by an eavesdropper who promptly conveyed it to Malam Mustapha. But Ali had already decided to become a Christian and to face the consequences of that choice. The incident of the fire, the continuing opposition of Mustapha, the friendship and witness of Idi, Saidu and Dumma, all had an effect upon him. Saidu confessed his conversion,

> 'I have been reading the Arabic Testament for a long time, in secret, like many other Hausa malams. Slowly God opened my eyes'.[1.]

This confidential exchange was overheard by Mustapha, who accused the apostates of betrayal and who threatened to disclose their betrayal to the authorities. Here again Miller conveyed his awareness of the price exacted by Muslims from those of their number who converted to Christianity. Mustapha attempted to strike a bargain - the hand of Dumma, daughter of Saidu, in return for silence about apostasy. The girl answered for herself, confessing that she too, wanted to become a Christian. This wholesale conversion meant that, as Christians, the men would have to resign their public offices. The Emir accepted Saidu's resignation, but reluctantly.[2.]

There were two reasons why Saidu could not be silent about his conversion. The first was that within a few hours Mustapha would spread news of his apostasy throughout the area. The second reflected

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1. ibid, page 47.
2. ibid, page 50.

a key insight in Miller's attitude to Islam and to the would-be Muslim convert to Christianity. A Christian could not remain a secret disciple. One of the major aspects of Miller's presentation of Christianity to Muslims was his insistence on the importance of open witness in the Christian life. In this he was aided by the fact that Muslims themselves were accustomed to the idea of public witness, in that testifying (shahāda), was a religious duty on their part. A secret Christian was as unthinkable as a secret Muslim. The extent to which some Christians were obliged to conceal their faith because of opposition from men like Mustapha was proof, for Miller, that religious freedom was not tolerated in Islamic society, in spite of Muslim disclaimers.[1.] A gentler note is found in the words which Miller puts into the mouth of the Emir, who had to accept the resignation of two upright men because they were Christians, and to contemplate the appointment of Mustapha. The Emir's recognition of merit, and his refusal to condemn, are reminiscent of the attitude of Gamaliel.[2.]

> 'By the works of an infidel we know an infidel. I will tell you what Malam Saidu has done, and you shall judge'.[3.]

In due course, Mustapha's appointment as Saidu's successor, was confirmed. It was an unpopular choice. His plots against the Christians intensified. Mustapha arranged for Ali and his brother to be killed. By a ruse he had a letter sent to Ali - ostensibly from Iro who was still in prison - saying that Iro was ill. Ali

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1. Qur'ān, 2 ^{256}.
2. Acts, v, 34; xxii, 3.
3. WMC, page 51.

went to the prison only to find his brother well. By then it was too late. Both men were knocked unconscious, tied up in sacks, carted through the city and out of the gate, and thrown down a disused well. The next morning, two golf-playing Europeans whose round took them past the well heard a feeble groaning from below. Iro was already dead; Ali was alive, but badly injured. Miller unfolds the plot by uncovering the deception and plotting of Mustapha, until the Emir is finally convinced of his duplicity.[1.] The episode is concluded when Ali receives a letter written to him by his brother in prison shortly before he died, in which Iro quotes two verses from the first letter of St. John, read from a copy of the Epistle given to him in school, and retained in prison.[2.] Meditation on the verses had led to his conversion.

The final rescue of the soul, if not the body, of the wayward Iro invests Miller's story with an element of Victorian sentimentality which may pain the modern reader. He appears to claim too much in the outcome of a tale which strains the reader's credulity. But his aim was not to write literature, but to encourage missionaries to pursue a lonely and difficult task among Muslims, in locations where the harsh realities of failure were already too well known to require literary expression. Miller succeeds in enlisting the reader's sympathies for Mustapha to some extent. Accused by the Emir of seeking to kill Christians because of their rejection of Islam, Mustapha said,

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1. ibid, pp. 66-82.
2. I John, i. 8-9.

> "It is you as ruler, and king of this country who should have killed them, not I. You are a learned man and know our holy law which says that if a man apostatizes from Islam he is no better than a dog, and is to be executed".
>
> "That is true, Malam. But our law does not say he should be murdered by common thieves. The law provides that he be taken to the Amir and other learned men and, after a chance of repentence, if he still remains obstinate, then he be sentenced to death".[1].

Miller added one interesting comment to this exchange, making Mustapha reply to the effect that even if Muslim procedures had been followed to the letter, the apostates would have escaped death because the British authorities would have intervened.[2].

The trial of Mustapha was held in Kaduna, before an English judge. The accused was defiant and unrepentent, and the death sentence was passed. The sentence was not carried out. Within a few days Mustapha died in hospital of a virulent dysentery. Miller tried to tie up all the loose ends in his story, and it turns out to be a tale in which all may live happily, either in this life, or the next. Ali and Dumma are married. Ali's mother appears from Zaria. Even Mustapha, conscience-stricken, and impressed on his death-bed by the Christian love for an enemy shown to him by Ali, seems to be on the point of conversion. From a literary point of view this seems unnecessarily artificial, but behind the artifice, and the manipulation of the characters, Miller's attitude to Islam becomes clearer. Islam is defective because it requires of its adherents an inflexible devotion to tradition, and because it is not illuminated by the kind of love which is characteristic of Christian discipleship at its

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1. WMC, page 80.
2. ibid, page 81.

finest. At the same time Miller's Christianity finds its focus in the way that a Christian shows love, in action and service, to all he meets. The weight of credal formulations and theological accretion gives way in his own thinking to a more immediate and personal response of the believer to those in need. Miller grew increasingly sceptical of institutional Christianity, without ever reaching the point where he felt obliged to leave the Anglican Church. Instead, his faith became more universalist in nature, and he came to believe that however incomplete a given religion was, it could be the means by which individuals might be prepared to receive the Gospel of Christ, provided that sufficient Christians could be found to engage in mission. Saidu, towards the end of the story, is reading the Bible and comparing it with the Qur'an. It is the story of Cornelius which delights him.[1] And when he comes across the words,

> 'He was the light that lighteth every man',[2]
> he begins to expostulate with someone in his own household who used the word "heathen" too glibly'...
>
> "God, does not know us by the terms, 'Jews', 'Christians', 'Moslems', 'heathen'! We are all his children. We must learn to give up all terms of reproach and try to love as Christ loved".[3]

For Miller it was not enough for someone to call himself a Christian. His story had shown that there can be bad Muslims as well as good. At the end of The Coiners he reveals that the older man who had led Iro into crime, was in fact a Yoruba who became the second husband of Ali's mother. This curious dénouement provides Miller with

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1. Acts, x, 1-48.

2. St. John, i, 9; Authorised Version, "that was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

3. WMC, page 84.

an opportunity to point out to his Christian, as well as to his Muslim readers that not even a good Christian upbringing can safeguard the Yoruba, the son of an African clergyman, from a life of crime. For it was he who was the chief coiner, and his life was a counterfeit.

(b) The Isawa Mallams, and the community at Gimi.

Miller's approach to the renewal of both Islam and Christianity, on the basis of a readier acceptance of the need for surrender to God's will, and for a profounder practice of Christ-like love, is exemplified by his actions in the case of the community at Gimi.

For almost fifty years before Miller established a Christian mission in Zaria, there had been a small number of Isawa, that is, disciples of Jesus, scattered throughout the northern area as a result of persecution - and yet waiting in an eschatological expectation for the coming of a white teacher, himself a disciple of Jesus. This new teacher would deepen their understanding of the prophet ʿĪsā, about whom their Qur'ān had much to say, and about whom their own prophet Malam Ibrahim, had been even more specific. The sources for a study of this interesting group of believers are few. Miller's own accounts were written some twenty or thirty years after the incidents he described. Subsequent research has shown that his version of the story is substantially correct.[1] It was, in fact, Miller who turned out to be the expected teacher. The encounter between him and the remnant who inherited the traditions and beliefs of a nineteenth century Muslim martyr provides several insights into Miller's attitude to Islam and to the praxis of Christian mission among Muslims.

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1. I am indebted to Dr. Ian Linden, formerly of Ahmadu Bello University, for much information used in this section. Dr. Linden was kind enough to send me the typescript of an unpublished seminar paper, "The Isawa Mallams c. 1850-1919: some problems in the Religious History of Northern Nigeria". A.B.U. Occasional Paper, 1974, henceforth LIM.
In a letter to me, dated 5 March 1975, Linden refers to the "Wusasa community, which originally stemmed from a Muslim sect known as the children of the Israelites, popularly called the Isawa". See Appendix B, infra, pp. 390-392.

The fact that the Isawas existed at all, even though under constant harrassment from conservative and orthodox Muslims in Northern Nigeria, shows that the development of indigenous - and even syncretistic-religious sects was not unknown among Muslims. The proliferation of indigenous forms of Christian faith and practice in Africa is better documented.[1.] Who were the Isawas? They were the descendents of the first followers of the Kano court mallam, Ibrahim, who became prominent in the city's affairs some fifty years before Miller's arrival in northern Nigeria.

Ibrahim had attained recognition as a scholar for his mastery of the science of tafsir, exegesis of the Qur'ān. By the middle of the nineteenth century he had established his position at the court of the Emir, Muhammad Bello. He had been impressed by the several Qur'ānic references to ʿĪsā, Jesus. ʿĪsā was an honoured prophet in Islam, but Muslims refused to recognize him as divine in any sense. Ibrahim noted that various significant titles were accorded to Jesus, who was described[2.] as the Christ (al-masīḥ ʿĪsā), an apostle (rasūl) of God, His (i.e., God's) word (kalimatuhu), a spirit proceeding from God (waruhun minhu), and as one worthy of regard (wajīhan)[3.] in this world and in that to come. The mallam began to collect, and to study, all the references to ʿĪsā in the

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1. See supra, page 33, footnote 2.
2. Qur'ān, 4 [171].
3. Qur'ān, 3 [45]. No instance of the use of the Qur'ānic title, ibn maryam, has come to hand, but this may not be significant.

Qur'ān.

> 'As he proceeded he was more and more filled with wonder. 'Who is this of whom our own prophet writes? Can this be a man like the others mentioned in our sacred Book? Is not this a greater than all, greater even than Mohammed himself''?[1].

On a visit to Cairo, Ibrahim came across a copy of an Arabic New Testament. Diligent reading of the Gospel had sent him back to a deeper study of the Qur'ānic ʿĪsā.[2.] In time Ibrahim was convinced that the orthodox view of ʿĪsā was defective. He gathered a small circle of followers around him. It is not surprising that the Muslim authorities in Kano objected to his heresy, and called him to repudiate this innovation. He refused. He was given one full day to say the kalima,[3.] and to perform salla,[4.] but declined to do either. For this apostasy he was brutally killed by having a pointed stake pushed through his body from anus to throat. This was done in public, in the market place in Kano.[5.] During the agonizing hours it took him to die he counselled his followers to seek safety beyond the borders of Zazzau (Zaria), Kano and Bauchi. And he foretold, in a kind of apocalyptic vision, that his followers were to wait in expectation that God would reveal to them the true religion, at some unspecified time.

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1. WMRP, page 106.
2. cf. supra, page 318.
3. "There is no God but God; Muhammad is the apostle (rasūl) of God".
4. The obligatory cycle of Muslim daily prayer, carried out in public.
5. For a different version, see infra, page 390.

His followers were scattered, but many were hunted down, persecuted and killed. One escaped to the borders of Kano province where it has been claimed, he founded the Kingdom of Ningi.[1.] In isolated areas the few survivors held to Ibrahim's beliefs in the second coming of ʿĪsā, in the conquest of Northern Nigeria by the Christians, i.e. Whites, and in the coming of a European teacher who would lead the people into the true religion. Under the leadership of a man called Yahayya, in Turawa, they had continued in expectation of knowledge about the prophet ʿĪsā, without surrendering their Muslim beliefs and practices.

> 'It is worth notice that these people knew no Christians and nothing of the Christian religion; that they had remained Moslems, performing all the moslem ritual and holding to their religion and law, with some slight deviations, enough to make them 'Non-conformists', while essentially Moslems".[2.]

The "slight deviations" to which Miller referred above can be seen from a table of doctrines and religious practices prepared for the Resident of Zaria, when putting up a case for the establishing of the community at Gimi. The first three items on the list were the ones in which Miller detected Wahhābi influence.

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1. Ayandele, MIMN, page 150 corroborates this tradition, and gives the impression that he was able to check the facts on a personal visit to Ningi in April 1961. He cites no other authority. Linden notes that Adell Patton, who worked in Ningi more recently, denies the Isawa link there "categorically", LIM, page 7.

2. WMRP, page 108. The first reference to the Isawa is in "C.M.S. Christian settlement at Gimi", in the Kaduna Archives File (1914-1929). See also letter to Miller from G.T. Manley, dated 9 December 1919, G3/A3/L10, page 25.

1. Strict adherence to the belief in an absolute unity of God.
2. The rejection of anything unusual about Muhammed and a refusal to retain the latter part of the Kalimat:
'And Muhammed is the Prophet of God'
3. A rejection of all the 'Traditions' and a return to the Koran alone and the Christian Scriptures.
4. The declaration that Jesus Christ was the 'Word' and 'Spirit' of God, and He alone was the Saviour,
Muhammed never having announced himself as such.
5. A refusal to carry out all ordinary Muslim ritual, the Kibla,[1] and a modification of the Ramadan fast into a fast to be observed at any time, not prescribed and not universal and not with the knowledge of others.
6. Prohibition of tobacco smoking and Kola-nut.
7. Emphasis on the resurrection and on Christ alone as having the power to raise the dead'.[2]

With a lead like this Miller was not slow to see the possibilities for Christian evangelism even in those remote areas of the north, as yet untouched by mission. Here was evidence of people, who,

> 'holding to the teaching of Mallam Ibrahim, are outside the pale of Islam; some in the villages from Kankhanki right on to Ningi, one or two in the neighbourhood of Rogo and some in Kano itself, the city'.[3]

During the first rainy season after his return in 1913 from furlough, Miller was engaged in one of his favourite activities, playing hockey with a group of boys belonging to the mission in

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1. Arabic, qibla, i.e., turning to face Mecca during prayer.
2. Miller to Goldsmith, 21 February 1914.
3. ibid.

Zaria. At the end of the game he was approached by two young Hausa Muslims who had been watching. Having heard some of the mission boys witnessing in the nearby market to their conversion to Christianity, the two visitors had returned to their own people, some thirty-five miles away from Zaria, determined to make contact with the teacher (i.e., Miller), whose teaching their traditions had taught them to expect. When the two returned to Zaria, they spent a week living with Miller. At the end of the week they disappeared. For Miller it had been another interesting contact with Muslims which had appeared to have come to nothing. A few days later two more young men called on him.

> 'They told us of a number of friends, all waiting and hoping for something to happen. There were many families, they said, living in various villages at distances of ten, fifteen, and twenty miles from each other, all having the same keen expectation of some truth to come from western strangers. All this was put before our little church of ex-Moslems, now Christians in Zaria, with the result that it was arranged for the members of the church to take it by turns to go to some central place to which all these inquirers might come'.[1]

One of the members of Miller's congregation went to visit one of the groups, and wrote to Miller describing the enthusiasm he had encountered for the message of Jesus. He said that there were men like Cornelius - and their families - just waiting to be instructed, and even some ready to be baptised.

After further exploratory visits between the two communities, a request came from the heads of the Isawa families, that they should be given some land, or an unoccupied village, where they

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1. WMRP, page 110.

could set up a new community. In 1914 Miller informed the Resident of Zaria, that the group of Isawas had been founded some fifty years previously by a Muslim pilgrim - a Hausa mallam from Kano, called Ibrahim - who had just returned from the pilgrimage to Mecca. Miller detected Wahhābī influences in their doctrines, but felt that the British authorities need not withhold permission for the community to live at Gimi, on the grounds that they represented an embryonic and potentially subversive mahdist movement.[1.]

Neither the Resident, nor the Emir, of Zaria favoured the proposal, but Lugard was ready to support the venture for two reasons. By paying their taxes promptly, and by behaving in an exemplary fashion, they would prove their loyalty to the Emir. By accepting the existence of the new community in his area, the Emir could show qualities of impartiality, presiding over the administration of those who did not share his faith, as well as of the majority who did. Miller saw the new community as one which might conceivably bridge the gulf between Christianity and Islam, and point the way forward for Christian missionary work among Muslims. The reason for this was that the Isawas claimed to be Muslims, but wanted to become Christians - or followers of ʿĪsā masīh - on the grounds that this was perfectly consistent with their reading of the Qur'ān.

Within the space of three months one hundred and twenty men, women and children were busy building houses and a church at Gimi. They began to farm the land, and to live together amicably. The

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1. cf. Ayandele, MIMN, pp. 147-148.

unoccupied site at Gimi had been given by the Emir. It was not until it was too late that Miller was told about the history of the place. Several attempts to settle there had been made previously. All had failed because the climate was too unhealthy. A mysterious disease, associated with the work of demons, had taken the lives of those who tried to live there. The disease was trypanosomiasis, or sleeping sickness.

At the beginning of the experiment it looked as if a genuinely indigenous movement towards Christianity was emerging. For two years, progress was steady. The church was filled for worship. Baptisms were frequent, and the relationship between the Isawas[1.] and their Muslim neighbours was increasingly friendly. The children went to school in Miller's C.M.S., compound in Zaria. Miller's West Indian colleague, the Rev. W.A. Thompson, helped to supervise the development work.[2.]

In spite of spirited attempts to make the community self-sufficient in foodstuffs - notably guinea corn and millet - and prosperous, by selling off surplus crops such as sugar, disaster struck. The expected rains had failed in the years 1912 and 1913. As a result, the grain did not swell. 1913 and 1914 were years of famine. The effects of the famine were felt from Sokoto to Bornu. The Niger Company provided rice at reduced prices, but not all the earnest humanitarian help from Miller, and many more,

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1. As their Christian motivation increased, and their claim to be Muslim (even in a sectarian sense) was challenged, the Isawas, i.e., followers of the prophet ʿIsa (Jesus), were known as "ansa", Arabic ansar, "helpers". In Qur'an 61 14, ʿIsa calls upon his disciples to be "my helpers", ansarī, to (the work of) God.

2. Miller paid a generous tribute to Thompson in WMRP, page 82.

could meet the need. No-one died in Gimi, but all suffered from malnutrition.

> 'The Christians never lost their desire for the conversion of their Moslem countrymen, and much quiet useful work was done, of witnessing and faithful evangelism'.[1].

Writing of the experiment much later, Miller described the location of the village in idyllic terms. Not far away from the village was a river where the people bathed, and from which they drew water, but soon the adults fell ill, with a sickness which it took Miller too long to diagnose. He blamed his inexperience. The "secret enemy" was sleeping sickness.

> 'In the undergrowth of these trees, in the silent pools and the rank vegetation, as well as in the long grass, myriads of tsetse flies were being bred. These stung the people'.[2].

By the time the diagnosis was made it was too late to save many of the victims. The children, who were at school in Zaria, escaped the disease. Their elders, with only a few exceptions, died. The new community was destroyed in its infancy, and with a searing incidence of degradation.

> 'In the latest stages of the disease even the dearest friends shrank from the strain and disgust of the continual nursing needed. I can only say that even leprosy and cancer, with their greater suffering, are preferable to this foul thing. It is not so much the pain, for that is not great, but the utter moral degradation, the fear of which makes the patient from the onset of the disease long for a speedy death'.[3].

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1. WMRP, page 114.
2. ibid, page 114.
3. ibid, page 116; Miller has an important "Note on the Problem of Sleeping Sickness", in WMRP, pp. 121-123.

Apart from the pain caused to him by the sight of so much human misery, Miller's faith was severely tested by this disaster. Why had the hand of providence been withdrawn? Had God forsaken His own work?

> 'Was it not up to Him to have saved this little community, who, out of the great mass of Islam surrounding them were alone confessing the Name of Jesus'?[1].

Far from destroying his faith, this incident served in the end to confirm it, and to require of Miller an even more diligent application to the problems caused by tropical diseases. The alleviation of human suffering was an expression of his Christian Socialism. But it was even more than that. Miller held that the readiness of the Christian to combat suffering and misery was an index of the ultimate triumph of Christianity over Islam in Africa, for it was Islam which appeared to take a fatalistic attitude to disease, and to leave the people without help. If Christians could be seen as servants of the people in their greatest need, this would materially help the extension of Christian mission. Miller concluded that the incidence of disease was not evidence of God's will, but of the consequences of man's disregard of God-given laws for healthy living.

> 'We learnt also that this, like other terrible plagues - leprosy, malaria, smallpox, must be fought and conquered, not tamely submitted to in the moslem way, merely ejaculating 'Allah''.[2].

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1. ibid.

2. WMA, page 54.

Of those who went to Gimi, few survived. Some of the children grew up and settled in other Muslim provinces. Other Muslims saw the hand of God in the destruction of the Kafirai in Gimi. The heretics had suffered the fate prescribed for apostates. The desolation at Gimi, now abandoned once again, was a grim reminder of failure, but Miller did not count the experiment a total loss.[1] Yet his own reputation did not remain untarnished. His rejection of Muslim fatalism was understandable, but his conclusion that the events at Gimi were an occasion for God to chastise those whom He loved, is difficult to understand. Various questions arise about the preparation made for the experiment. Miller criticised the Emir for presenting a plot of ground which was known to be unfit for human habitation. Miller, for all his experience, appears to have been unaware of a case history which, as a doctor, he might have been expected to know. Although his relationships with British administrators - except Lugard, (now isolated from the local situation by distance and preferment) - were cool, he might have taken better advice about the Gimi site before proceeding in such haste. It is also difficult to understand why it took so long to diagnose the fatal disease. His clinical experience may have been slight, but the disease and its symptoms were not unknown to him. It is not easy to account for these failures, but it does seem that on this occasion, he pressed for a project to be started without a sufficient consideration of all the relevant factors.

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1. WMRP, pp. 118-119.

It is not easy to evaluate Miller's account of the Isawas. The existence of a kind of proto-Christian community in parts of the rigorously exclusive Muslim north, prior to the influx of Christian missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was (and is) something which, in the nature of the case, many Muslims felt obliged to deny. In the difficult days which followed the Biafran War, it was not possible to gain access to any relevant information, even in the pursuit of research. Attempts to penetrate the curtain of Muslim sensitivity on the point have been largely unsuccessful. For the present there appears to be no good reason to deny the general summary of the position described by Miller when he was in a good position to know. Allowing for any exaggeration which might have resulted from his understandable enthusiasm at the discovery of such a group, it seems that Miller drew two conclusions from his experience. First, that the faith of the Isawas was an authentic expression of indigenous piety, wholly independent of any alien European influence. Second, that the development of Isawa Christology was based upon an interpretation of the Qur'ān itself, an interpretation which other Muslims could understand, provided the orthodox teachers allowed the necessary degree of freedom.

More information about the Isawas is emerging in spite of the difficulties of field-work at the present time. It is possible that Miller knew more about them than he was prepared to tell. The fact that his description of the group, when first he met their representatives in 1914, is substantially the same as when he wrote much later in the twilight of his career, suggests that

he consistently shared what information he had. Further research has revealed some interesting details. The British authorities in the north did have reservations about the political implications of missionary work. In this particular case they were not wholly re-assured about the harmlessness of the Isawas, who, according to Miller, had discovered Jesus in the pages of the Qur'ān.[1] The British asked Hans Vischer in Kano to check on the history of the Isawas. He confirmed Miller's account after interviews with two mallams in Kano, who told him,

> 'When Abdullahi was made Emir of Kano, Ibrahim left many tenets of Islam and taught his new doctrine of which the distinguishing feature was that he would not declare Mohammed to be 'Prophet of God''.[2]

From the same source Vischer was able to confirm that Ibrahim had refused to repeat the second part of the kalima that he had been publicly impaled as a heretic, circa 1855, and that there were many sects of Islam, of which the Ningi type was one. He added that the most important disciple of Ibrahim had been Yahayya, who had transmitted the teaching about ʿĪsā to his followers in Turawa, before they had left for Gimi. This provides some independent evidence in addition to what Miller wrote himself. There is one place in Miller's writing on the subject, which suggests that he may have known more, but did not feel obliged to tell.

> 'The whole account of this interesting man Ibrahim, and his disciple Yahayya would take a volume to narrate fully'.[3]

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1. LIM, page 8, footnote 1.
2. ibid, page 9.
3. WMRP, page 108.

In 1974 Ian Linden, of the department of History at Ahmadu Bello University, attempted to gain further information about the Isawas, by turning directly to the oral tradition, as preserved among the surviving descendants of the Gimi pioneers. The work which he and his colleagues were able to do is incomplete. His detailed research was hampered by political developments, and by ideological antipathies between himself, as a scholar trained in the use of historical-critical techniques, and the local Muslim authorities, for whom these techniques were alien to the spirit of Islam. The intriguing question for the student today is, how much knowledge did Miller have of the history of the Isawas, in addition to what he revealed in his various books? Linden had access to authorities in the oral tradition whom Miller probably knew two generations earlier. By the time Linden began to look, his authorities were the survivors of the remnant who had survived the disaster at Gimi. These few were old men and women, whose memories were also stored with the events of sixty years of Christian experience.

> 'Ibrahim's death is often biblicised e.g., he is said to have been crucified. Mrs. Amin Kauye, grand-daughter of Mallam Yahaya, described the event in the following way in an interview at Kaduna 12 September 1974: 'After the act they came to the Emir to say that it had been done. You brought this thing on us, look, now the sun does not shine. They said to the Emir, 'You have brought this thing, it is not our fault'. The man remained three days in agony before he died and for those three days there was no sunshine. This was the story my grandmother used to tell'[1].

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1. LIM, footnote 2, page 9.

Miller never succeeded in eliminating from his thought a sense of, at least partial, responsibility for what happened in 1914. For him the Isawas were a bridge between Islam and Christianity. Their faith represented a purification of Islam, a necessary stage on the road to fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The experiment failed, but the failure strengthened Miller's resolve to use whatever means were to hand to further Christian evangelism. The Isawas had already satisfied him that, in Northern Nigeria, there were those who were "already half-way towards faith in Christ".[1.]

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1. cf. supra, page 300; Appendix B, infra, pp. 390-92 gives further details of the Isawas. The material comes from tape-recorded interviews with descendants of the Isawas who were Miller's contemporaries at Gimi.

(c) Social problems in a Muslim society.

In the last section, attention was given to Miller's attitude to a group of Muslims who saw in the figure of Jesus, the fulfilment of their own faith. Miller's attitude to individual Muslims may be gathered from his record of the twenty-seven years - from 1902 - 1929 - which he spent in the city of Zaria. It was this intimate association with the daily life of Muslims, made possible by the unique opportunity to live in such close proximity to their homes, which enabled him to engage in many informal conversations. Any Muslim who visited him to seek advice, or to provoke controversy, about spiritual matters, was able to do so without drawing undue attention to himself. This appealed to Miller, because it facilitated the one kind of continuing personal Christian missionary witness which the authorities seemed prepared to tolerate. It gave him time to understand the ways in which Islam impinged on the lives of individuals. When subsequently, he was obliged to withdraw from his privileged location inside Zaria, this intensely personal aspect of mission became more difficult. Fewer Muslims went out to see him, and this he regretted, as an opportunity lost.[1.]

Miller's attitude was influenced by his day to day observation of the life-style of the Emir, Aliyu. This skilful and cunning traditional ruler was the first to assume a delegated responsibility for governing his people according to Muslim law under the newly

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1. See supra, page 290.

introduced policy of Indirect Rule. The Emir was an autocratic ruler, whose power was derived by heredity, from one of the companions of dan Fodio.[1.] Aliyu was opinionated, scholarly, charming on occasion, and devious. He was the son of Sidi, a notoriously ruthless ruler, whose people feared his capacity to inflict summary punishment on those who disagreed with him. Aliyu stood in this line. His cultural accomplishments could not always conceal a streak of violence in his character. His political power was real, hereditary, and supported by British authority, but this did not mean that his rule was popular and unchallenged. Although suspicious of Miller's presence in Zaria, Aliyu was on friendly terms with him. In spite of differences it appears that Miller held him in personal esteem,[2.] but the years of his rule were,

> 'a long drawn out torture to the people of the province. It was commonly said that but for the British Administration there would have been a repetition on a larger scale of the terror of his father Sidi's rule'.[3.]

Aliyu was the kind of opponent whom Miller had consciously set out to influence and convert. In the evangelical language of the day, Miller never ceased to covet him for Christ. In the relationship between them can be traced Miller's attitude to the

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1. His Fulah grandfather, Malam Musa, carried one of the Shehu's green flags to bring the jihād to Zazzau (Zaria), and its environs. One of the features of the nineteenth century jihāds was that the vigorous expansion of Islam resulted not only in the recovery of Islamic areas, where apostasy and syncretism had occurred, but also in the incorporation of non-Muslim areas into the re-vivified Islamic community. For dan Fodio, Miller had a high regard, cf. WMRP, page 32.

2. WMRP, page 140.

3. ibid, page 128.

best that he considered Islam had to offer. Aliyu was clever, industrious in discharging his responsibilities, and free from the excessive zeal which, on occasion, drove fellow-Muslims to promote jihād against the Christian missionaries.[1.] But as a Muslim, he was obliged to support a system which - in Miller's opinion - could not satisfy the spiritual and political aspirations of a subject people. What Aliyu did, he did efficiently, and even conscientiously, but Miller increasingly felt that the social blue-print of Islam was inadequate. The social implications of Islam infringed basic and God-given human rights. In the Islamic scheme of things it was the individual who suffered deprivation. The autocracy of a traditional ruler such as Aliyu, was as much a part of the Islamic framework, as the subservience of his individual subjects. Aliyu could do no better, could act no differently, until he rejected Islam in favour of Christianity. And for Miller, this increasingly meant Christianity with an explicitly socialist content. Traditional Muslim rulers had upheld a cruel and oppressive social system. If society were to be changed, and millions of ordinary people were to be treated properly, then old traditions would have to be swept away.[2.]

By the end of his years in Zaria, Miller's Christian Socialism had become explicit. He had moved considerably from the strong Toryism of his youth. Side by side with this there had developed

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1. ibid, pp. 129-130.

2. WMA, page 49.

an aversion to dogmatic theology, and authoritarian religion of all kinds. His rugged individualism was manifest in all this. Social inequality, oppression, exploitation of the individual, and privilege vested in an oligarchy - either political or religious - were indices of an unjust society. This influenced his attitude to Islam, but it was not only Islam which missed the mark. He came to feel that the injustices against which he campaigned were somehow inevitably perpetuated by Islam. To this extent Islam was inherently defective. But equally there were kinds of Christian polity which led to injustice. The saving grace, so far as Christianity was concerned, was in the life and teaching of Jesus, the one in whom all could find freedom and salvation. He saw the possible dangers of a socialist state, but felt that - for the Christian - there was no alternative to association with the work of the Labour Party.[1.]

And in his own religion he claimed a personal freedom to interpret the Gospel. The path of liberation which he invited Muslims to tread did not lead to what he would have considered as being merely an alternative form of authoritarian religion, namely a dogmatic and hierarchical form of Christianity. True liberation from all forms of oppression, for Muslim and Christian alike, was to be found in a personal and living relationship with

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1. ibid, page 59.

Jesus Christ.

> 'I had been drawing nearer to the beliefs and practice of the Society of Friends, feeling less and less necessity or value of the Sacraments for full-grown Christians. The teaching of both St. Paul and St. Peter on the Priesthood, the royal priesthood of all believers seemed to make the external pomp and show, together with the assumption of special powers by the priesthood of the Church of Rome, and to a lesser extent of the Church of England, more and more unwarrantable and absurd. I found myself longing that in the Universal Church of Christ all these externals, which made the internal and spiritual take a subordinate place, might be totally abolished'.[1].

Miller's Christocentric religion was of a kind which sought to mitigate injustice and inhumanity in the short term, and to eliminate the causes of oppression in the long term. His vision of the Kingdom of God on earth was derived from his reading of the life and ministry of Jesus, the One in whom God had shown how men were to approach Himself, and also how they were to deal with each other. Aliyu never became a Christian. The struggle between Miller the Christian, and Aliyu, the Muslim continued until the latter was deported for life, on serious charges.[2]. Aliyu was punctilious in the observation of his religious duties, but at moments of crisis resorted to a more ancient indigenous religious tradition than Islam for solace. He was superstitious, and in the habit of using charms and potions, either to protect

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1. ibid, page 58. Miller did not become a Quaker. He remained an Anglican, on the grounds that, in spite of its deficiencies, the Anglican Church was sufficiently comprehensive, with regard to beliefs and practices, to provide him with a spiritual home; see W.O. Ajayi, HNM, pp. 458-460, on Miller's attitude to lay participation in the sacraments. The concept of a United Church is examined by Ajayi, ibid, pp. 530-542.

2. WMRP, pp. 138-140.

himself or to injure his enemies.[1] In the event he was removed by the British authorities. Miller was unable to rejoice at his departure, and felt no sense of victory at the removal of a skilful opponent.

> 'The only possible victory would have been for Aliyu's life and character to have been changed'.[2]

For Aliyu to have changed, he would have had to move far from Islam. Miller held that no reform of Islam, however far-reaching could be sufficiently radical to make possible the social changes which were necessary. From time to time in his writings Miller drew attention to the practices which Islam was ready to tolerate, if not condone. This took him directly into the field of social action.

Miller's condemnation of slavery, in all its forms, was total. To all who were involved in it there came moral degradation. Slave-takers and slave owners were coarsened and brutalized by the traffic. Male slaves suffered most in physical terms, as a result of continuing forced labour. Women suffered from assaults on their spirits and bodies. The practice was thoroughly evil, and did nothing even to boost the sagging economies of those territories where it was common. Miller describes a typical slave-raid vividly, going on to speak of the consequences for a typical ruined village.[3] He felt bitter at the sight of the innocent victims of such disruption. Miller saw what was happening through

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1. See supra, page 333.
2. WMRP, page 139.
3. ibid, pp. 27-28.

European eyes, but he was not blinded to the aloof complicity, and guilt by association, of the British authorities who failed to stamp out the evil.[1.] This, at any rate, was the way he saw it, failing no doubt to understand the complexities of Indirect Rule, with which the small group of expatriate officers had to cope.

Miller detected in the Islamic attitude to slavery a legacy of callousness which rendered succeeding generations of Muslims progressively insensitive to the human misery which slavery produced. This insensitivity, once tolerated with regard to fellow human beings, soon extended to the rest of the animal kingdom. One of the worst features of life in the Muslim community was, in his view, the treatment of animals. The acceptance of cruelty to animals stemmed from the refusal of Muslims, qua Muslims, to invest all human beings - of whatever religion - with the right to freedom, and fair treatment.

Having made this point, Miller conceded that some slaves could, and did, make remarkable progress in Islamic society.

> 'It is probably well known that women slaves having borne children to their masters become, ipso facto, freed women; the offspring are always legitimate of course in Islam, and inherit equally with the children born of those with the status of wife. There are no disabilities whatever; in fact quite a fair proportion of the ruling emirs of Moslem states are the offspring of pagan women.

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1. W.R.S. Miller, For Africans Only, Lutterworth, London, 1950, pp. 13-14.

> This is one redeeming feature in an otherwise bad business. Such women slaves often obtain considerable influence, a high position in the household, and not infrequently considerable power in the state; they have also far more real freedom than the orthodox wife.[1.]

But these exceptions could not alter the principle. Slavery was degrading, and left its mark on all those who were involved. The element of fear was seldom absent. Miller recalled that, prior to the period of British administration, slaves were told of a wise decree of Providence, under which a white mark - only visible to Muslims - was placed on the black foreheads of male and female slaves. No slave who escaped was ever free from the fear that some Muslim would recognize his real status, and expose him.[2.]

Although Miller condemned slavery, he took the view that to forbid it overnight, and to impose heavy penalties on those who did not immediately comply, would be too disruptive. Effective reform, and sound government could only come gradually. There were, in any case, signs that the worst excesses of slavery were disappearing. The religious zeal, and fierce proselytism of the Fulani jihāds, had gone by Miller's time. The propagation of Islam in Northern Nigeria was not a highly centralized affair. It was the Muslim trader, and the peripatetic mallam, who were the unobtrusive agents for the dissemination of Islam, and they

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1. WMRP, pp. 28-29.
2. ibid, page 29.

had neither the willnor the power to organize slave-raids. Miller noted the difference between the process of Christian mission and Muslim infiltration.[1.] The British did prohibit the slave-raid, but Miller knew that, in individual cases, it was possible for the law to be circumvented. One of the ways in which this was done leads Miller to reflect on the treatment of women in society.

The kidnapping of children, from the French territories around Lake Chad, and from other areas, was still going on in the 1930's, when Miller was reflecting on his experiences. Some parents were even prepared to sell their children in order to get money to buy food. Among these children there were young girls, whose fate was not to be closeted in the harem of a Muslim ruler, but to be married off to slave boys or men. This practice had gone on for many years, and it helped to perpetuate a supply of slaves, in that the issue of such unions remained the property of their masters.[2.]

Under British administration, anyone born after 1901 was free. Men were probably more aware of this than women, because the women were more secluded from the world. Women slaves were not disposed to question their lot, but Miller felt that it was only a matter of time before the outside world burst in on these private arrangements. When that time came, and with it the end of this

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1. ibid, page 30.

2. ibid, page 32.

form of slavery,

> 'monogamy, assisted by all the social, political and economic factors of the twentieth century, will make, as it has elsewhere, a more successful fight against polygamy; and incidentally it will afford the vindication, on non-religious lines, of what is really a great religious truth, the true union of one man to one woman, and only one, in marriage'.[1].

The wilful autocracy of some Muslim rulers is shown by the example of Aliyu, Emir of Zaria. He had a young, free-born girl of less than nineteen years abducted from her home, and delivered to his palace. Not even the Muslim authorities could defend such action, which was universally condemned. Aliyu refused to release the girl. Having kept her in a hut, he retired to another house. The hut was subsequently destroyed by fire, from which the girl did not escape.[2]. Miller recounts this incident not to show that the rights of women in marriage were unprotected in Islam, but that these rights were very different in a Christian union. Aliyu was not infringing Muslim tradition in desiring another young woman. His sin was to seek to elevate her to the state of wife, when he already had the four by Qur'ānic law, and when he was unprepared to divorce one of the latter to make room for the new arrival. Had he been content to treat her as a concubine he would not have broken local tradition, because there was no numerical limit on that arrangement. The legal position within Islam was complex, and often a matter of local interpretation, but for Miller, the fundamental principle was clear. Anything which led to the subordination of women to men

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1. ibid, page 33.
2. cf. supra, page 310.

in society had to be measured against the standards of Christ. In Islam a woman enjoyed some well-defined rights, but, with few exceptions, they were the privileges of seclusion.[1.]

Even so, there could be no easy transposition from polygamy to monogamy, even among Christians. Ancient traditions and prejudices were too ingrained. To a group of African Christians in Kano, Miller put a question about the relationship of the woman to the man in marriage. The answer reflected not an acceptance of mid-Victorian English ideas, but a persistence of an ancient and indigenous feeling that wives should obey their husbands.

> '...there must be fear or we shall never keep our women from despising us'.[2.]

To a missionary, such as Miller, the problems presented by mixed marriages between Christians and Muslims, were formidable. From time to time he concluded that the understandable insistence on church order resulted in injustices to individuals which a more Christ-like compassion would have avoided. In a series of four short case-histories, based on his own observation, he raised several questions which show his willingness to consider ways in which Christianity might be expressed more fittingly in an African setting.

The first case was that of a young Christian clerk, employed in the Muslim north, but coming from the coast.[3.] No girl from

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1. WMRP, page 157.
2. ibid, page 158.
3. In the period after independence in 1960, the employment of non-Muslims in the north was discouraged by the Muslim authorities.

his own group would marry him, for that meant accompanying him to a remote part of the country. Away from home, and among strangers whose customs, language and religion he did not share, he resorted to a form of diversion which his own faith should have taught him to shun.

> 'There are no girls of his race and religion available; but there are lots of young Moslem Hausa girls who have broken loose from their seclusion, and if not actually 'on the streets' are certainly at his disposal for the asking. They get 'married' in native fashion, which means that a few friends come round; there is a feast, some money passes hands; quite possibly a malam will say a prayer in Arabic, and the matter is settled. They are very happy; they have four children, and the little home is, after its kind, a model one. The relationship, though not pledged as 'life-long', nevertheless has elements of real faithfulness'.[1.]

This action led to estrangement from the church. The woman faced other pressures from within the umma not to become a catachumen, but what the man feared most was that he would not receive a Christian burial when the time came.[2.] In this particular case, Miller's sympathies appear to be more with the man than the woman. It was the man who was the object of seduction, and there were, apparently, several women - whom Miller does not hesitate to identify as "Moslem" - who thought the man fair game. So far as the position of women in a Muslim society is concerned, this incident tells us little, except perhaps that Miller could be hasty in attributing promiscuity and irregularity on an occasion such as this. It was, after all, the mallam who invested the marriage, however 'native' with some form of respectability.

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1. WMRP, page 160.
2. "a very terrible matter to an African (Christian)", ibid, page 161.

Miller's second case was of a Fulah, married to a Muslim widow. He became a Christian, but his wife declined to change her religion. She continued to live with him, until the two sons by a former husband grew up. Then she left home, and the Fulah Christian had to fend for himself. With no Christian woman prepared to marry him, he took a cousin who was a Muslim. For this he was excluded from the local church. His plea was that his first marriage had not been Christian, but this was discounted. Either the second wife had to become a catachumen, or he had to cease coming to the Sacrament.

The third case concerned a Muslim boy who attended Miller's school in Zaria, and who became a Christian. He married a well-educated Christian girl. After some years of marriage there were still no children. To the husband this was reason for shame. He took another wife, and - from the Christian point of view - committed bigamy. The local Christian community considered that he had cut himself off from the church. As a result he returned to Islam. Miller asked two rhetorical questions. Was this man lost to Christ as a result of his action? Should he have been lost to the church?[1.] Miller suggested that the answer to both questions ought, properly, to be - no, but before proceeding to point to ways in which the church might develop in the midst of these conflicting loyalties, he cites the fourth case, which can be given most eloquently in his own words.

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1. WMRP, page 161.

'A determined Moslem until he was twenty, he was one of the little band of those who in our early years in Zaria came whole-heartedly to love and serve Christ. Some time before the war in the Cameroons in 1915 he became a soldier, and it seemed practically imperative for him to have a wife to live with him. There was no Christian girl available, and after much heart-searching he married a Moslem woman, with the determined purpose of winning her to Christ. For many years he was put out of all the communion of the church. But he held on; and at last, through the example of his fine life and clear consistent witness, the wife also came out of Islam, accepted the faith of Christ with all her heart, and the two became one. He has been the leader of our Hausa church in Kano, and for years has won the respect of Moslems and Christians in Zaria and Kano. Farmer, soldier, barber, evangelist, and now pastor of a church, and a town councillor under the British Administration! But when he and I have had heart to heart talks, he has told me how terrible was the strain on his loyalty, and how nearly he wavered'.[1].

Miller understood that the social mores of one nation could not be imposed on another. He made an important distinction between someone who might be said to have a Christian conscience, and someone who had an English conscience. The mistake of many was to assume that the second could serve for the first. In the relationships between men and women in a place such as Zaria, there were extra tensions because of the way in which the old established order was being challenged by the new. In condemning the sin of polygamy, or any other form of liaison between men and women not blessed by Christian formulae, Christians had to learn to be careful of judging what they did not understand. Miller was ahead of his time in this regard. He argued for a transitional period, perhaps a long one, in which the people could grow accustomed to change. In so doing he did not compromise the principle of monogamous and life-long union in marriage,

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1. ibid, page 162.

but showed a compassion for those caught in the throes of sudden change.

Instead of criticising he offered practical suggestions. Islam had failed (and was likely to continue to fail) in the education of girls. This challenge had to be taken up by Christians, in an exemplary way, so that the existing situation, in which young Muslim girls were forced to consider the only option of marriage from the age of fourteen onwards, was radically changed. Education was not to be completely diverted from considerations of the family, however. Girls would marry, and they had to be educated for family life and the management of the home.[1.] Mingling of races and tribes meant more intermarriage. Miller felt that what was needed, pre-eminently, was a general raising of the status of marriage in all traditions, pagan, Muslim and Christian. Christians could point the way forward, but they could never dictate, or impose, their ideas. The full impact of the Gospel, and the extent of the liberation which Christ came to bring to the individual, were lessened by censoriousness on the part of Christians. What pained Miller was the absence of a close, deep friendship between man and woman in marriage. On numerous occasions Miller saw examples of what he described as callousness, when Muslim women were divorced by their husbands, because they had passed the age of child-bearing, and because the husbands had turned to younger

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1. None served the needs of girls for this kind of education at this time better than Miller's sister Ethel, and Nancy Bryant. See E.P. Miller, Change Here for Kano, Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Nigeria, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1960.

women. It was want of Christian love which ultimately made defective that which Islam prescribed as legitimate. When the discipline of the church was so rigorous that the penalty for ethical irregularity was excommunication, Miller considered that the church itself was lacking in the love of Christ.[1.]

In the Christian community, the rule should be for the members to see sin and failure in a corporate sense. Condemnation for sin should be self-condemnation. Restoration to the community should be the insistent aim of each member, and denied to no penitent who desired it. In this way, the better way of Christ would be exemplified. Christians would attract others to faith, not by confrontation, polemic, and doctrinal disputation, but by the example of love in action. Social injustice, the inequalities of wealth and poverty, would be reduced. The treatment of women, the institutions of marriage and family life would be transformed by love. Idealism and reform had been blocked by disciplinary methods. The church had important lessons to learn from the stultifying praxis of Islam. Muslim masters had justified the exaction of penalties for theft and adultery, and defended the flogging of women and the brutality of prison methods, on strictly disciplinarian grounds. Forgiveness and reconciliation, in terms that Christians should understand, were not present in Islam, as Miller saw it, but there was also a danger that Christians would come to rely too much on formal rules, and, thus, impede the work of the Holy

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1. WMRP, page 166.

Spirit.[1] Fundamentalism, in any of its variant forms, and in any religion, was unacceptable to Miller. By fundamentalism he meant any expression of an exclusive claim to truth, accompanied by a desire to force a particular view on others. The suppression of free enquiry with regard to matters of faith and morals could not be reconciled with the example of Christ's actions. Islam provided for a coherent way of life, based upon an uncompromising and unchangeable revelation of God. For Christians too, especially those living as a minority community within a Muslim majority, there should be a clear link between the principles of faith and the practice of loving discipleship. As he grew older Miller pressed for a continuing exploration of the moral implications of religious belief. To the criticism that this pre-occupation made him less insistent on the need for Christians to remain orthodox in a doctrinal sense, he answered that the believer should rather keep an open mind - in order to be open to truth from whatever source, recognized as such by the ways in which it constrained the believer to care for the sick, to succour those in need, and to be open to the religious experience of others. This openness became a central part of his personal credo.[2]

Miller's final position on the question of polygamy was based upon three observations. He conceded that Muslims would be guided by the legal code and customs of Islam, but asserted

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1. cf. St. John, xiii, 34-35.

2. WMA, page 60.

that this had not stood in the way of changes required by time and circumstance. He summarised his three observations on polygamy in a letter written to a young Nigerian friend.

> 'Firstly, after very careful research, statistics extending over a considerable period were compiled by the Dutch Government some years ago for the East Indies. These showed conclusively, quite against general belief, that polygamy, far from increasing the birth-rate, distinctly lowered it. That also has been my very definite experience, leaving no doubt whatever, over a long period of residence in Nigeria.
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> Secondly, the moral effect on the polygamous man seems to be very deleterious. He tends to become a bully, a man who does not readily make friends with other men, counting them as possible rivals, and is by no means saved from indiscriminate sexuality through having more than one wife. In fact the tendency to sexual irregularity seems to be much increased.
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> Thirdly, I cannot help feeling ... that unless the first wives have grown old, the position of women forced to live with one, two or three rivals for their husband's care and affection is a very hard one, and surely not justifiable by any law which has an atom of humane feeling in it'.[1].

This last sentence gives the key to an understanding of Miller's attitude to Islam. His criticism of what he considered to be injustice and inhumanity was not destructive. He constantly sought to be constructive. Evil had to be exposed in the light of universal principles, for the adherents of no single religion had a monopoly of social virtue. Miller felt that the most dangerous person in an Islamic state was the one who professed no religion. In his experience, the local people respected and

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1. Walter Miller, For Africans Only, Lutterworth, London, 1950, pp. 56-69.

trusted the convinced Christian, so long as the convictions were expressed in acts of humanity. For Miller, this was the clue to the way in which Christian mission should be conducted. He taught that missionaries needed to recognize the simple truth that their propaganda was far less effective than their readiness to share common experiences; that preaching - though retaining its importance in the life of the church - must be subordinate to personal conduct. In any case, Muslims would inevitably judge the former in the light of the latter.[1.]

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1. Miller was consistent in his belief that Christians of all churches working among Muslims should adopt a common approach. Much earlier in his career, the United Conference of Protestant Missionary Societies met in Calabar, from 7 to 9 November 1911. A decision was taken there that Christians would adopt the phrase "Christ is Risen!" as their common watchword and salutation.

9. A Comparative Assessment.

In this final chapter, the attitudes to Islam of Crowther, Blyden and Miller - previously considered separately - are reviewed in relation to each other. The basis for this comparative assessment is provided by the consideration of Christian attitudes given in chapter one.

(i) Truth, falsehood, and degrees of relativism[1].

The statement 'Christianity is true, Islam is false', expresses in summary fashion the predominant attitude to Islam of nineteenth century European Christians. The question is, to what extent was this attitude shared by the three subjects of this study? A close examination of the attitudes of Crowther and Miller leads to the conclusion that this terse formulation expresses their final and considered view on the matter. This conclusion is inescapable, even allowing for the frequent and genuine steps they both took, during the course of lengthy careers, to understand the claims of Islam. Attempts to see, in Crowther and Miller, precursors, or pioneers in inter-faith dialogue, as the term is generally understood today, are questionable. Crowther's record speaks plain and it will not bear any post hoc imposition of today's attitudes and assumptions about the history of religion or about inter-faith dialogue. Crowther is not an exemplar of dialogue, but of the kind of missionary

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1. supra, pp. 1-11.

evangelism which seems to be out of favour at the present time. He was at pains to familiarize himself with the beliefs and practices of Islam, in order to be able to understand them and to refute them. In so doing he set an example for his successors to follow. The study of Islam, the study of the Qur'ān, and the constant disputation with Muslims about their faith, were the necessary preliminaries to the presentation of the Gospel claims, and to the expectation, in faith, that conversions would follow. Blyden's case was different. At the beginning of his career in West Africa, he was content to identify himself as a Presbyterian missionary, but as the years passed he lost the conviction that Christianity was the best guarantor of the Negro emancipation which he advocated. Increasingly, he sought inspiration in the example of Islam, but never became a Muslim. A comparison of their attitudes to Islam links Crowther with Miller, although there were differences of detail and emphasis between them. Blyden was the odd man out, and can be considered separately.

(a) Crowther and Miller

Each of these men tried to come to terms with the mutually exclusive truth-claims of Christianity and Islam. Their conclusions - which some might consider to be their initial prejudices writ large - were that Islam was significantly defective theologically, and in its arrangements for human relationships. In particular, they criticised the unsophisticated reductionism of the Islamic doctrine of God, which rejected any discussion of trini-

tarian doctrine from the Christian side. The truth, as they saw it, resided more fully in Christianity.

In this regard they saw Islam as defective rather than false. Muslim insistence on the primacy of tawhīd, as the beginning and ending of any valid understanding of God, effectively ruled out Christian experience of God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Neither Crowther nor Miller sought to grapple very deeply with this crucial theological problem. This is not surprising. Neither was a theologian. Crowther's simple piety was immune from the Christological controversy raised by Islamic teaching.

Miller's trinitarian orthodoxy seems to have become less secure with the passage of time. Two factors may have contributed to this. First, his independence of spirit, which prompted him to pay less and less attention to institutional Christianity, and to its attendant credal statements. Second, his growing isolation from the leadership of the mission in the north of Nigeria. Like Crowther, Miller had to endure the criticism of European missionary colleagues, who questioned the wisdom of his policy. The fact that he came to be attracted to Unitarianism,[1.] and to the Quaker style of worship does not amount to conclusive evidence that he had been influenced by Islamic theology on the point. There is no evidence to show that his Christology had been radically altered by his experiences. The Christian faith retained his allegiance. Central to this was his personal faith in Christ. More to the point is that he felt

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1. See supra, page 267.

an isolation from his colleagues because of age, and felt obliged to pursue a more solitary path. To the end he believed that the future of Africa lay with Christianity, in spite of the continuing dominance of Islam, and the residual (but increasingly resilient) power of traditional indigenous African religious beliefs and practices.[1.]

To understand the confident exclusivism of their attitudes to Islam, it is necessary to remember the preparation and training which each received, before they assumed their individual responsibilities. They came from very different backgrounds, but each was an inheritor of nineteenth century British - one might say more specifically, English - attitudes to religion and society. The resurgence of Christian missionary work in the nineteenth century among the peoples of West Africa was primarily the fruit of non-African evangelical fervour and initiative, although Africans (and the descendants of African forebears) played an important part in the enterprise from the beginning. Crowther owed his emancipation and his subsequent career, humanly speaking, to a small group of Christian activists in Britain who fought for changes in the law. They campaigned for the extension of British naval power off the West African coast, to prevent further transatlantic trade in black slaves, and to liberate those already taken. There can be little doubt that the motivation of men like Wilberforce, Granville Sharp and

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1. cf. E. Bolaji Idowu, "The Predicament of the Church in Africa", in CTA, pp. 417-437.

Fowell Buxton, was Christian in an exclusive sense.

Others shared their humanitarian feelings for the oppressed, and supported their opposition to this form of injustice, but lacked their particularistic Christian convictions. The evangelical churchmen took it upon themselves to do more than free the bodies of the slaves. They took it in hand to attempt the much more complex task of freeing the souls of Africans still enslaved to superstition and false religions. This was the way in which they saw the matter. Together with other Christians they encouraged the growth of missionary groups, founded to obey the dominical injunction, to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. Crowther was a beneficiary of this policy, and educated by some of its first practitioners. It is not surprising that he assumed something of the attitude of his mentors.[1.]

The prevailing European attitude to Islam was hostile, and Crowther was influenced by it. He also called on his own experience of the ruthless Muslim Yorubas, who destroyed his village community, and sold him into slavery. That Christianity (whose representatives had liberated him) was true, and that Islam (whose representatives had enslaved him) was false, was a proposition which he never found it difficult to accept. He

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1. It has been asserted that Crowther thought of himself less as an African and more as "a black Englishman", but this is an unworthy comment. See Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions, Penguin, 1975, pp. 377-378.

owed his freedom, and his subsequent career, to the intervention of the British, and never seriously doubted that his work was guided by the Holy Spirit, whose agents at the critical moments, the British were chosen to be. The notion that a man might be guided by the Holy Spirit is alien to Islam.[1.] The Muslim repudiation of such guidance was further indication, for Crowther, of the incompleteness of Islam.

Crowther's attitude to Islam was based on personal observation. He described and interpreted what he saw. Islam was "a poisonous doctrine", a "great imposition", from which his wife's mother was delivered by her conversion to Christianity.[2.] Islam was a religion which "makes a man dependent upon his own merits for salvation".[3.] These pronouncements were not calculated to satisfy an objective observer, but Crowther did not pretend to be detached. He was engaged in what he regarded as a struggle for the souls of men and women, a struggle which called for a decision between clearly differentiated options. In view of the social pressures on a Muslim to keep faith with the umma, it is surprising that converts to Christianity ever declared themselves openly.

Crowther considered that, when compared with Christianity, all other religions lay in the shadow. Islam permitted practices which were forbidden to Christians. It allowed polygamy and the

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1. The holy spirit (jibrīl) in Islam, has a different function and significance.
2. EHM, page 6.
3. ibid, page 6.

keeping of concubines. It permitted the use of charms and other superstitious practices such as the use of extracts from the Qur'an for securing personal desires. It made of prayer, and of the practice of religion generally, a mechanical - and not infrequently perfunctory - performance of prescribed ritual. Above all, Islam, in Crowther's analysis was a co-ercive force in human society. Submission was not only required as a voluntary act consequent upon a spiritual conversion. It was enforced by rulers and elders who would brook no individual defections from the umma.[1] It was this factor which made mission among Muslims so difficult. Freedom to choose anything other than Islam was not characteristic of an Islamic community.

Crowther himself had experienced the two aspects of liberation which he constantly tried to hold together in his presentation of the Christian faith. He had experienced liberation from physical bondage. As an ex-slave he was well able to understand the yearnings of his fellow Africans for deliverance from the degradation of slavery. But he had also experienced (as he would have put it) a spiritual deliverance from the bondage of sin. His conversion to Christianity provided the dynamic for his missionary work among his own people. His theological understanding of liberation proposed to substitute an acceptable form of service (that of man to God), for an unacceptable form of slavery (that of man to man). So much was common ground with Muslims, but Crowther's experience was such that he saw nowhere

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1. CMS G3/A3/03, 1888. Crowther is discussing the progress of Islam in West Africa, dated 31 December 1887.

in Islam, either in theory or in practice, so comprehensive a repudiation of oppression as that offered in Christianity. For him truth was in Christianity, or more strictly, in Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.[1].

In several important respects, Miller's attitude was similar to Crowther's. Both men lived and worked before the time when a retreat from doctrinal orthodoxy, at least on the Christian side, prepared the way for a discussion of religious beliefs and experience, which was expressed in the language of relativism. To detect in their attitudes any seeds of the various degrees of relativism considered in chapter one, would be anachronistic. Neither Crowther, nor Miller was ever of the opinion that there were different, equally effective, paths to God, and to salvation. Both men consistently denied any suggestion that Christianity and Islam were alternative, and equally acceptable, systems of religious truth. The formal language of religious relativism, was not the language of their discourse, as has already been noted. They lived several decades before relativism itself, paradoxically, assumed the status of orthodoxy in the realm of religious belief. They both preached the universalism of the Gospel of Christ, and both preached exclusivism. Christianity was true - at all times, and in all places. Without being required to say so in as many words they implied the falsity of Islam by comparison.

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1. St. John, xiv, 6.

Miller's attitude to Islam was not significantly modified during the course of his long career, and there was no radical change from the position he adopted at the outset. He was, primarily, a missionary doctor, imbued with the ideal of service in the name of Christ. He was a man of his time, strongly influenced by evangelical Christianity, of an Anglican mould. For him, the challenge of Empire was an opportunity to shed light in dark places. European ideas, and Victorian sensibility in particular, influenced Miller directly. The heady confidence of the British in the rightness of their imperial cause and in the value of their cultural mission to the world allowed for little questioning of the self-evident supremacy of the Christian religion, on which their civilisation was based. Miller's character was formed in the crucible of a strictly disciplined personal life, in which the obligation for the strong to help the weak was an essential catalyst. He was blessed with an especially robust constitution. He became more patrician, as experience and opportunity fed his natural inclination for leadership. This is important for understanding his achievements because, in nineteenth century terms, he was not born into a position of wealth and power. He was proud of his origins and training, but continued to conceal more than he revealed about the former, while being insistently explicit about the latter - as if sensitive to any possible criticism which might isolate him from his more readily identifiable establishment contemporaries.

The field in which he chose to work was Muslim. The most immediate way of describing and interpreting his attitude to Islam is to consider his approach to Muslims as evidenced by his best known venture into fiction. His story, The Coiners,[1] was the fruit of a life-time's experience among Muslims. The aim of the book, as outlined in the Foreword, was the aim of his working life. The point to note is that he had come to understand, as few of his European predecessors appear to have done, the cost of Christian discipleship. There were two aspects to this. First the cost to those who, like himself, devoted themselves to the rigours of missionary work in an alien and inhospitable environment. There was little new in this for a generation of European Christians, who derived their knowledge of the difficulties and dangers of missionaries from the largely one-sided accounts, provided by letters and deputations, of those whom they supported with prayers and finance in the field. Miller added another dimension to the story by drawing attention, secondly, to the cost of Christian discipleship paid by Muslims who - from the Islamic point of view - apostatised, that is, who incurred the wrath of their fellow Muslims by committing shirk. In The Coiners Miller set out to,

> 'give to some English readers an idea of the path of struggle through which a Moslem may come into the fuller faith which is in Christ'.[2]

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1. See supra, pp. 299-316.

2. WMC, page 3.

This sentence at once identifies a characteristic component of Miller's attitude to Islam. Islam was never less than a faith which could lead to God, but it was an incomplete faith. Passage from Islam to Christianity meant moving from a faith which was incomplete to a faith that was "fuller". And the key to this fuller faith was Jesus, a Prophet honoured in Islam, but seriously misunderstood by Muslims, in Miller's view. Whilst sharing Crowther's attitude about the superiority of Christianity, Miller paid more attention than the Bishop to an explanation, addressed to the existing members of the Christian church, of what was required of Christians, when a Muslim became a convert. It was not that Crowther was unaware of the problem. The fact was that his responsibilities and influence ranged much further afield than Miller's. Miller was a member of a small, and privileged, Christian enclave, within the surrounding Muslim community. His concern for the welfare of a Muslim convert was an immediate one. In these circumstances conversion to Christianity entailed much more than a public profession of faith. Conversion meant exclusion from the umma, so the convert was entitled to the kind of acceptance within the fellowship of the community of Christian believers, which - to some extent - also underwrote his economic needs. This was something that Miller never ceased to emphasise. It gave his attitude to Islam a practical edge, so that what might otherwise have shown too theoretical a face, assumed a more human expression.

(b) Blyden.

The grand design of European imperialism, which influenced Crowther and Miller, also had an effect on Blyden, especially when his literary and rhetorical prowess was winning him the admiration of London society. The flattery which came his way at that time was potentially seductive but, unlike both Crowther and Miller, his original attitudes had been formed in a society very different from that of nineteenth century England.

The United States had been founded upon libertarian principles, ostensibly designed to secure for all citizens those rights and privileges which had been denied to the founding fathers in the Europe of their time. But those rights and privileges had not been extended to Negroes. Furthermore, it had been a nominally Christian society which had connived at the continuing oppression of the Negro race, and Blyden himself had been a victim. Christianity had, plainly, not been the instrument of Negro liberation. From the beginning of his work in West Africa, Blyden's attitude to Islam was, in consequence, different from those of Crowther and Miller. He distinguished between Christian ideals, and the practice of Christians. He remained convinced that, in spite of the disappointing failure of Christians to live up to their ideals, Christianity was possessed of ideals to which all could hope to aspire. He did not argue that Christianity was true, and Islam false. Nor did he argue the contrary proposition by transposing the terms. His attitude to all religion was pragmatic. He looked to see which system - at that time - best served the needs of Negroes.

His vigorous defence of the record and achievements of Muslims in Africa was less the consequence of any conviction that Islam was true, and Christianity false, than the result of an intention to show - to black and white Christians alike - that a stricter adherence on their part to the Gospel, preached and practised by Jesus Christ, would eventually take them further along the road of understanding, social justice and racial equality. Muslims had shown what might be done.[1] Christians, who elected to be truer to the ideals of their faith, could do better.

Like Crowther, Blyden had a non-African name which he did not change. More so than Crowther, he secured an enviable reputation as a savant and a scholar, and recognition in the western world for his considerable intellectual gifts. He was of black African descent, born in the West Indies. Although the initial impetus of his work in Africa was a missionary one, his concept of mission developed to include designs on a grand scale for the spiritual and intellectual emancipation of Africans - a liberation which, though acknowledging the importance of religion (initially Christianity, but subsequently Islam), encompassed much more besides. He, of the three subjects of this study, did most to understand the significance of Islam for Africans. And he sought to interpret this to non-Muslim westerners.

The fact that he endeavoured to interpret Islam to non-Muslims, or at least to defend it, from unwarranted attacks, shows that his attitude was far from negative. But even here,

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1. E.W. Blyden, West Africa before Europe, C.M. Phillips, London, 1905, pp. 37-93.

his rhetorical flourishes barely concealed the superficiality of some of his analysis. This can best be illustrated by looking more closely at a particular case, already mentioned in chapter 6, in which Blyden criticised a non-Muslim author for mis-representing the teaching of Islam on the nature of jihād, and on the way in which Muslims should treat those of other faiths.[1.]

In Osborn's book,[2.] Blyden sees a serious mis-representation of Islam, which he sets out to expose and to correct. The point to which he takes greatest exception is Osborn's insistence that the ninth sūrah of the Qur'ān enjoins holy war against "the votaries of all creeds other than of Islam".[3.] Blyden insists, with some justification, that sūrah 9 is a prescription for peace and tolerance, and that to isolate a single passage is to do violence to the teaching of the sūrah as a whole. This raises some deeper issues of interpretation which the reader expects Blyden to consider, in explanation of the latter's strictures on Osborn. But this deeper exegesis does not appear. The reader who understands a little about Islam is left with the feeling that Blyden's understanding of the subject is less profound than it appears. This can be made clearer by following through some of the issues raised by this Qur'ānic passage - issues which Blyden might have dealt with, but of which he seemed to be unaware.

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1. See supra, page 229.
2. Islam under the Arabs.
3. supra, page 229.

He insists that the ninth sūrah of the Qur'ān condemns those who are described as mushrikūn, that is, those who associate any created being with God. This is correct, but a rigorous analysis would have revealed a more subtle distinction than Blyden makes. He derives from the sūrah a more eirenic meaning than the immediate sense of the words, and the historical setting to which reference is made, will allow.

> 'There is nothing in the original teachings of the Mohammedan religion that requires hostility to Christians. There are, no doubt, bigots and fanatics among Muslims, as there have been and are now bigots and fanatics among Christians; but the spirit of the religion, as taught in its original records, is tolerant. And here we cannot but protest against the unwarrantable emphasis with which Christians generally persist in calling themselves 'Infidels' when professing to represent the light in which they are held by Muslims. No such term is ever applied to Christians either in the Koran or by intelligent Mohammedans. And for Christian controversalists to insist upon such a use of it is only to foster prejudices which, in this enlightened age, ought to be entirely eliminated from the popular instincts of Christian countries'.[1].

The ninth sūrah has much to say about a specific situation which developed in the young Muslim community at Medina, and about how Muslims should distinguish - not only between the faithful and the mushrikūn, but also among themselves as to who are "hypocrites" (munāfiqūn). The internal threat to the Muslim community at Medina was a serious matter, but the domestic difficulty did not mean that Muslims were unaware of the dangers which faced them from outside. In this regard, sūrah 9 provides for the proper relationships which ought to exist between Muslims and pagans, and between Muslims and Jews

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1. CINR, page 254.

and Christians. The latter relationship is of absorbing interest in the development of Muslim polity.

What was to be the attitude of Muslims to the People of the Book? In the Meccan period Muhammad sought friendship with Jews and Christians on the basis of a common religious position which was said to derive from Abraham. The growing hostility of the People of the Book towards Islam compelled Muhammad to reconsider his attitude. It was not possible to treat them as pagans in the strict sense. Their possession of sacred scriptures, their traditions of belief in, and worship of, the One God, and their common spiritual descent from Abraham, necessitated a different approach. As the possibility of friendship in a common cause receded, the Muslim charge against both Jews and Christians was that they had fallen from the heights of monotheism and had 'associated' others with God. The section of the sūrah (verses 5-29), which must have been among the last parts of the Qur'ān to be revealed to the Prophet, epitomises the shift in attitude which had taken place since the mission of Muhammad began. Not only the pagans, but Jews and Christians also, are to be placed under the obligation of paying tribute. This break with the People of the Book, which in point of time closes the period of the revelations, is argued on the basis of theological deviation, and only secondarily on grounds of political deviousness. The real sin of the Jews and the Christians was shirk, and it was this which made it impossible for Muslims to countenance the claims of either Jews or Christians to be groups in possession of a comparable revelation of truth to their own. The way is

thus cleared for the propagation of a religion which brooks no rival and which, where its critics seek to belittle it in terms of what it has borrowed from the past, is proud to demonstrate its capacity to purge the heresy from those systems which are antecedent to it. The enemy of Islam, the enemy of God, is one who refuses to submit to God, whether he be pagan, Jew, Christian or nominally Muslim. The exemplar for the new Muslim community is the Prophet Muhammad himself. Muhammad, far from being the enemy of God, is extolled in the contemporary situation as one who stands in the line of Abraham who was the 'friend' (khalīl) of God.[1].

Blyden fails to grapple with these points, and thus fails to provide his readers with the necessary background for evaluating Osborn's own work. Blyden sees nothing hostile to Christians in "the original teachings" of Islam. He is repeating a claim often made by Muslims, which weakens the force of a passage in the ninth sūrah itself.

> 'The Jews call 'Uzair a son
> Of Allah, and the Christians
> Call Christ the Son of Allah.
> That is a saying from their mouths;
> (In this) they but imitate
> What the Unbelievers of old
> Used to say. Allah's curse
> Be on them: how they are deluded
> Away from the Truth!'[2].

Jews and Christians are described as "Unbelievers", and accused of associating others with God. The penalty for their continuing apostasy can hardly be interpreted as less than dire.

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1. Qur'ān, 4 [125]; cf. Isaiah, xli. 8.

2. Qur'ān, 9 [30], the translation is that of AQ, page 448.

At the same time it is worth noting again that the epithet mushrikūn is not the key word in the ninth sūrah. That distinction belongs to the word munāfiqūn - "hypocrites". The word had a specific meaning in the life of the early Muslim community, and subsequently in the development of the believing community. Blyden does not bring this out, and although his general defence of the probity of the case for Islam was no doubt welcome to Muslims, it lacks the depth of interpretation which he might have given it.

The rise of Islam divided the people into two groups. There was the group which submitted to God and there was the group which did not. The dividing line was clearly drawn between belief and unbelief. Muhammad's primary missionary task was to his own people, the Quraysh. In the event of the latter's rejection of his teaching he turned to those individuals, groups and nations with whom he and his followers came increasingly into contact. Conversion to Islam could not, either by Muhammad's assertion of thorough-going monotheism, or by the practice of the specific ritual of the Faith, remain a hidden thing. Once a Muslim declared his faith he was an open disciple. In such a situation the Qur'ān prescribed in constantly repeated formulations for the proper relationships between pagans, Muslims and other People of the Book.

Those who stood outside the small but growing community which confessed the Oneness of God and the Apostleship of Muhammad could not be the heirs of the divine promises. These outsiders,

whether they were polytheists who knew no better, or Jews and Christians who had been mis-led by generations of increasing apostasy from the soundness and uprightness of the 'Religion of Abraham',[1] remained forever outside the Household of Faith unless they turned to the true Faith. The outward symbol of conversion was the shahāda. Ideally, this showed a conscious disposition of the mind, the heart and the will of the individual.[2]

A large part of sūrah nine is concerned with this essential distinction between faith and unbelief. Just prior to the death of Muhammad, the Muslim community in Medina had been threatened in a way which was more serious to its future than even the explicit opposition of pagan outsiders. The distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim was an obvious one. It was a matter of belief and practice. A less obvious (but no less real) distinction between faith and unbelief had to be made within the professing community itself. The discovery of a fifth column in the ranks elicited a more sustained and vehement polemic against the internal enemy than was called for in the struggle against Jews and Christians. Hence the importance of the word munāfiqūn which appears so frequently in the sūrah. The word epitomises a category of unbelief, the more insidious and reprehensible because it is covert, the more dangerous because it is within the believing community. It is this element which is the real enemy, attacking the heart of the confessing group. The munāfiqūn are those who profess with their lips, but whose hearts are not truly turned to God.

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1. Qur'ān, 2 130, 135.

2. SEI, page 249.

Blyden does not begin to engage with the theological implications of all this. The reason is that the point of his criticism (of both Christianity and Islam) was not sharpened by theological subtlety, but by racial theory. At the end he sought to use religion as a weapon against white domination.

> 'In our discussion of the Mohammedan question we do not consider the theology of the system, but its anthropology; those practical features of it which affect man, and especially African man'.[1]

Crowther and Miller could not match his dialectical skill, but they probably knew more than he did about the reality of Islam in the lives of its adherents. Blyden was not involved - as the other two were - in local attempts to implement the policies for which his elegant speeches and articles provided such eloquent, if sometimes inaccurate, advocacy. His talents were those of a creative thinker, and visionary, and not those of a meticulous administrator, or of a tactful leader of a team. His gift was to espouse a cause and to grace it, wherever he went, with rhetoric and passion. This sometimes led him to inconsistency in his presentation of the case as he sought, for understandably pragmatic reasons, to extract the maximum support from disparate, but appreciative audiences, from London to Philadelphia. He was universally lionized for his intellectual and literary achievements. As his personal stock grew, he became more impatient of institutions, systems and hierarchies. But the greater his acceptance in intellectual circles, especially

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1. E.W. Blyden, "Sierra Leone and Liberia", in CINR, page 232.

among whites whose regard he assiduously cultivated, the more scornful he grew of the intellectual and social crudeness of his Negro contemporaries. At the high point of his career, he found himself alone, suspected by blacks for his dalliance with European thought forms and social mores, and neglected by nominally Christian Europeans for his over-zealous defence of Islam in Africa.

> '...very few of his contemporaries appreciated the gospel of this visionary, nor were able to apprehend the message of this dreamer. In spite of this understandable handicap, his influence on the course of West African affairs of his day, especially those of Liberia and Sierra Leone and to a lesser extent, Nigeria, was so potent that students of African history and culture will not fail to recognise the genius of this illustrious son of Africa'.[1.]

(ii) Christian witness, relatedness, and presence.[2.]

Any discussion of Christian attitudes to Islam, which focuses on the three concepts mentioned in this sub-heading, assumes a more existential character, as the emphasis falls more upon the personal qualities of the missionary, and less upon the potentially divisive theological propositions to which he personally subscribes. Christian mission is, essentially, an activity which requires effective proclamation. The universal fatherhood of God, His redemptive activity for all in Christ, and the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit, are indispensable elements of the Christian proclamation. These are all aspects of the declarative obligation of mission. But there is another side, perhaps even more important in the long-term, which bears

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1. Nnamdi Azikiwe in his Foreword to Edith Holden's Blyden of Liberia, Vantage Press, New York, 1966, page 9.

2. supra, pp. 12-27.

upon the fruitfulness (or otherwise) of human relationships. This other side of mission has to do with sharing, in its fullest sense. Both proclamation and sharing need to proceed together. The proclamation calls those who hear it to a different way of life. The sharing illustrates that the different way of life can become a reality in a new community, in which those who confess Jesus as Lord accept the social implications of the proclamation.[1.] In the building up of community, the one who proclaims is the one whose personal example is the touchstone for his message. In this section, attention turns to a consideration of the extent to which the attitudes of Crowther, Blyden and Miller allowed them to identify themselves with the people they came to serve, and to share the problems they faced.

What strikes the student who considers Crowther's prolonged and sustained encounters with Muslims in West Africa is his fearless and forthright defence of orthodox Christianity. Crucial to this is Crowther's trinitarian theology. His rejection of Islam is on the basis of its incompleteness. Christianity possessed a rounded coherence which Islam lacked. Again and again Crowther emphasised the uniqueness of the Sonship of Jesus, who proceeded from, and returned to be with, the Father. The mediation of this truth about God came through the liberating work of the Holy Spirit. The three faces of God were united in the mystery of His creative, redemptive and revelatory activity, all focussed in the person of Jesus. For Crowther Islam could show no comparably coherent pattern of creation, emanation and

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1. cf. Lesslie Newbigin, The Open Secret, SPCK, London and Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978, pp. 135-180.

return. Its insistent unitarian formulation lacked the dynamic quality which characterized the Christian concept of Godhead. By comparison with the sophisticated techniques of modern critical studies, Crowther's contribution can easily be belittled. He was attempting to grapple with powerful themes at a time when he was increasingly beset with problems of administration and external criticism.

To modern eyes, Crowther's attitude to Islam is negative and unsympathetic. As a system of faith and as a way of life, he found it defective, but his approach to individual Muslims was courteous and direct. From the New Testament he derived a dominical imperative for his missionary work. He was to go and win souls for Christ and to build up the Church. He derived something else from the New Testament. This was transmuted by prayer and experience into the distinctive manner by which he conducted mission among Muslims - and others too. This was his understanding of Christian love. It was the love of Christ which constrained him to undertake the work and to continue it. But this love for individuals, for whom Christ died, did not extend to the religions which effectively kept them apart from Christ. Other religions were barriers which had to be removed.

At the same time Crowther makes clear that when speaking with Muslims, Christians should employ methods of quiet persuasion,

> 'without rudely and contemptuously attacking their superstitious objects of worship or their erroneous creed'.[1]

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1. EHM, page 15. The italics are Crowther's.

Crowther's attitude seems to have been an extension and application of the principle of loving the sinner whilst condemning the sin. It was the rejection of the Gospel which constituted the sin. Islam denied the working of the Holy Spirit, both in its divine creative activity in the mystery of the Incarnation, and in the continuing work of revelation, manifested in the church and in the individual believers who formed the people of God.[1.] It was for this reason that Islam was to be condemned, because it denied the truth. On the other hand, the sinner was to be loved and forgiven, precisely because of, and through, the power of the same Holy Spirit.[2.]

This brought Crowther close to the people to whom he sought to proclaim the Gospel, but the attempt to identify with the life of the African people - for him, as for Blyden and Miller - was not always successful. The difficulties can be illustrated in the following summary, and comparative, way.

Crowther had been forcibly removed, at an early age, from the Yoruba community into which he had been born. He was not an outcast, but he had been taken away, and even though he returned with impeccable African roots, to minister to his own people, his preparation and training for the work had proceeded elsewhere in Africa, and in England. So, too, in the course of time, he was given the responsibility of engaging in a part of black Africa, among peoples whose tribal backgrounds differed from his own, whose inclusion in the territory which ultimately

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1. cf. St. John, xvi, 1-15.

2. EHM, page 14.

came to be called Nigeria was in the nature of a historical accident. Crowther was one who left and came back. He was a man who shared in two worlds. He was the insider who never fully succeeded in re-establishing the title-deeds of his claim to belong to his own people, because of his long absences in other places, and by virtue of his espousal of what many of them held to be alien forms of religious belief and practice. But because of his impeccable African origins he could never be totally ignored in the development of his own people. Blyden, on the other hand, was an outsider, who returned to the African continent with good claims, both ethnic and intellectual, to be considered an insider. He was black, and a fine example of what the tutored African mind could achieve, given the necessary opportunities and help. Nevertheless, he was not accepted by blacks everywhere, not least because, in spite of his self-identification with Negro causes, he was cut off from the African by a great cultural gap.

Miller was an Englishman who served the people of Nigeria with a steadfast devotion over a long period of time, first, during the years of his active medical missionary work as a doctor in the northern part of the country. Later on he was to serve a second, and rather different, term in Nigeria, coming out of retirement in England to spend his last years in the country in which he felt most at home. He had never limited his activities to the strictly medical field. His vigorous advocacy of the social, administrative and political aspirations of

the people led him into conflict with government agencies, whether they were white expatriates in the colonial phase, or indigenous officials preparing for independence. His disaffection with the decadence of western society may have been the principle reason why he left retirement in England to seek fulfilment in a new country which he held to be full of promise, and which he hoped would accept him - not as an expatriate - but as a citizen. He was the outsider who presumed to become what few of his compatriots would have dared (or wished) to be, namely, an insider - a man who wanted to identify with, and to be accepted by, the people he came to serve.

Unlike Blyden and Miller, Crowther had living roots in West African society, and he belonged to the Yoruba people. Miller's European background isolated him from the indigenous people, whatever degree of acceptance his efforts on their behalf gained for him. Nor did Blyden's black skin, his Yoruba ancestry, his unquestioned mastery of languages both classical and modern, nor even his passionate advocacy of the Negro cause, serve to counteract the essentially expatriate quality of his work in West Africa.

On the other hand Crowther's incontestable identification with the people among whom he worked, allied to the personal experience from which he spoke, invested what he did with an authority which the other two lacked. He also succeeded in something else which enables the student of today to gain a truer measure of his achievement. Crowther succeeded in drawing the African experiences of the nineteenth century into the mainstream of human history.

The problems which he faced, and the solutions he offered may have related to a local situation far removed from what a sophisticated western world considered to be of prime importance. Yet what preserved Crowther's thought and action from provincialism was his conviction about the universality of the Christian Gospel. This remarkable catholicity enabled him to do many things that some of his contemporaries, and many of his successors, were unable to do. Because of his sense of the overwhelming loving purpose of God he was able to accept with a singular degree of serenity the various merits and virtues demonstrated in non-Christian life styles. For this reason he was able to engage in missionary activity and in the presentation of the claims of Jesus Christ, in ways which were less polemical than might have been expected. It was no fault of his that the particular Church he served failed to take his advice on some fundamental issues relating to the importance of African traditional religion in the lives of the indigenous people, to the patience required by all Christians who venture into the household of Islam, and to the understanding required in order to build up the African Church, so that with its own leaders and its own liturgical and doctrinal insights it could contribute from its riches to the development of the universal church.

Blyden's attitude to Islam was not that of a man who was dealing at first hand with the problems of evangelization. He was not involved as Crowther was involved in justifying a Christian missionary presence in a Muslim land, or held responsible for encouraging

Muslims to defect and to accept Christianity. For Blyden, the uppermost question was two-fold. First, what best conduces to the development of the Negro race, and to the realisation of the potential of its members once their own ancient heritage is more fully understood? Second, at what stage in this historical development is it most appropriate for Negroes to consider, as expressions of their own aspirations and needs, the respective claims of Islam and Christianity? Blyden came to hold the view that the conflict between the exclusive claims of these two religions would be resolved as a result of the passing of time. For the Negro race Islam was a necessary <u>interim</u> position in a developing process which could ultimately lead to Christianity, but dangers surrounded any attempt to impose Christianity, or to introduce it too early to Negroes insufficiently prepared. Unlike the bearers of Islam, Christian missionaries had come, bringing an alien culture which had helped to keep Negroes in positions of subservience. If Christianity were to survive in Africa, it would have to assume an African face.

But his public statements about the development of an African Church, for African Christians, were not always understood. In the United States, and in West Africa, Negro Christians detected an inconsistency in his approach, which prompted some of them to criticise him publicly, and vigorously, for what they considered to be his altogether too accommodating, and anti-Christian attitude to Islam. A good example of this is contained in the follow-

ing exchange. Blyden had been reported as saying,

> '... In Africa there are sixty millions of Mohammedans who are working for Monotheism and superseding Christianity. The Christian Missions are weak and are retiring before the increasing power coming from Arabia'.[1.]

This prompted a spirited reply from Lady Duchatellier.[2.]

Dr. Blyden put to Flight[3.]

> '...The Rev. Blyden went to dwell in Liberia to preach Christ to the brother bowing to wood and stone, and to enlighten the Moslem on the fallacies of Islamism, declaring to them the power of Jesus to save as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Has he fulfilled his obligations?
>
> ...he has omitted to say how many hundreds of Christians are in Africa doing the work he threw down!
>
> ...Has he, since he adores the Caaba (sic), ceased to note that in the evolution of society Christianity occupies the most prominent place?
>
> ...We know that Dr. Blyden is fully aware that Islamism is a vicious barbarity.
>
> ...Our Mohammedan sisters are subservient and degraded human beings, subjected to be tied up in a sack and thrown into a river at any moment that the jealous proclivities or the versatile mood of their cruel owners are roused... Christian women have a mission to those poor enslaved mortals. We cannot understand how a man of the intelligence and vast information of Dr. Blyden can cast off the sublime doctrine of salvation for the absurdities and the cruelties of Islam! Was he an ambassador of Christ without a message? Did he teach what he believed not?

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1. From a speech made by Blyden to the Maccabeans in London, and published in The Jewish Chronicle, 20 July 1898 (10th Ab, 5658).

2. A Panamanian Negress, with formidable talents for controversy. Her title was honorific.

3. "Two Great Intellects in Controversy", in VOM, December 1898, vol. 6, page 4. The authoress signed her piece, "Panama, 12 October 1898.

The significance of this piece of polemic is not in the crudity of its observations about social relationships in Islam. It lies, rather, in the pointedness of the two questions at the end. Blyden relied for support, especially in his campaign for black emigrants to leave the United States for Liberia, on American Negroes. But they were puzzled about the genuineness of his profession of Christianity. They were suspicious of his defence of Islam. Christians of his day could not understand his position. Lady Duchatellier's questions are to the point. They are not easy to answer. Blyden does not seem to have taught anything which he did not believe. It was not that he was a faithless ambassador of Christ. Crowther's emphasis on personal faith in Christ, and in the working of the Holy Spirit, is missing in Blyden. Blyden preached a Gospel of racial difference and racial equality, in which Christological controversy had no place. Blyden did not distinguish between Christianity and Islam on theological grounds. He separated Muslims from Christians by observing how they treated Negroes. This was the basis of his conclusions about the merits of Christian Missions in West Africa, the prospects for an African Church, and for the continuing influence of Islam.

Miller seems to suffer in any comparison with Crowther and Blyden even though his contribution to missionary effort in Northern Nigeria was neither ineffective nor undistinguished. For all his virtues of steadfastness and determination, he was temperamentally unsuited for the task of patiently building up

an indigenous church. His ministry and his witnessing were idiosyncratic, not in the sense that he encouraged unorthodox doctrinal positions, but in the sense that his own opinions, particularly on questions of ways in which the Gospel affected social relationships, were not to be challenged. He emerges as an autocrat, upright and uncompromising, but inflexible and unwilling to modify strongly held convictions. He was an increasingly solitary figure, who made a number of costly mistakes, notably at Gimi.

In Islam he saw an inflexible and uncompromising religious system, rigid in its social arrangements, and lacking in any redeeming theological concept of love, such as a Christian could appreciate, and - to some extent - identify with. His record, and his attitudes, have come in for harsh criticism by Professor Ayandele, who describes him as "impetuous and fanatical".[1.] The second adjective seems to be a little exaggerated, but stands as the assessment of an African scholar, by no means hostile to the missionary presence. Miller's intolerance was for Islam, not Muslims. He sought to serve them in every way possible. His theory of small groups of believers establishing themselves as cells of Christian presence at the centre of Muslim life, which was tested in Zaria, (and - to a lesser extent - near Kano, and at Gimi), foundered as his personal influence waned. What remained was an activity of personal witness, and - in the final years - an attempt to identify with Africans by renouncing the life of Europe. In the event, his final retirement to Jos

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1. MIMN, page 150.

confirmed the judgement of critics and friends alike, that he looked on his career as a failure to persuade his contemporaries of the wisdom of his ideas, and that, having so failed, he chose to withdraw, as a prophet without honour, to a place where some looked upon him as a father figure.

Conclusion.

Each of these three very different men sought to influence the course of future events in Africa. Each played a prophetic rôle in preparing Africans for the time when foreign domination would give way to national independence. Each sought liberation - for himself, as for others - from physical and spiritual bondage. This meant that all three became involved with the social and political implications of religious belief.

African Traditional Religion permeated the life of a community to an extent which made conformity to the ancient rules and traditions difficult to challenge. Membership of the Muslim community required a recognition of the exclusive nature of Islam, and of the way of life to wnich it gave rise. Christianity came as a challenge to both these existing, and well-established kinds of society.

In Crowther and Miller, Christianity found emissaries who expressed that challenge by proclaiming the universal sovereignty of Jesus, the Christ. They did this, mainly, by testifying to the Lordship of Christ in all things, from the experience of their relationship to Him in their own lives. This brought them

into immediate and lasting conflict with Islam, which rejects the Christological formulations of orthodox Christianity, on the grounds that they contradict the concept of tawhīd. For Blyden, these theological controversies did not arise. He carefully avoids them, and nowhere testifies in a personal way to the kind of Christian experience which was the foundation of Crowther's and Miller's approach to Muslims. The difference between Blyden and the other two was not that he failed to see the divisive issues between Christians and Muslims, but that he did not have a comparable faith in Christ to proclaim. This meant that his beliefs were not challenged to the same extent by Muslim strictures about the veneration accorded to Jesus by Christians. These strictures were not sufficiently convincing, in any case, to make him forsake Christianity for Islam, but they were understandable to him. His Christianity was, essentially, unitarian, and so the struggle to interpret trinitarian concepts to offended Muslims did not arise. None of Crowther's simple trust in the Son of God, or in the activity of the Holy Spirit is discernible in Blyden.

The differences of approach, to which attention has just been drawn, derive from different conceptions of Christianity, and differing views of the nature of Christian discipleship. There is, however, another aspect of the matter which, in a negative way, points to a common defect in the attitudes of all three men to Islam. In spite of their attempts to understand the teaching of Islam, its history in West Africa, and the nature of Muslim society, Crowther, Blyden and Miller ignore the exist-

ence of a more highly refined Islamic spirituality as it was to be found (for example) in the Qādirīya, or Tijānīya communities. It may be that they saw little local evidence of its power, but the fact remains that they provide no help to the student on this aspect of Muslim life in their time. They contributed, unwittingly, perhaps, to the view that West African Islam was an inferior type of Islam, bereft of cultural attainment and spiritual sensitivity. Not even Blyden was able to convey an impression of the depth of these traditions, whilst Crowther and Miller were not disposed to see any profound values in a religion which they felt obliged to help to displace in West Africa.

Blyden's contacts with Islam in the south-western part of Nigeria at the end of the nineteenth century convinced him that a new and re-invigorated African Christian Church had much to learn from the organisation, the spirit of self-help and the Africanness which characterised the life of Yoruba Muslims. But the Christian missionaries had another card to play. They brought with them a monopoly of western education. The prospect of advancement, by means of accepting the opportunities offered by western education, was attractive to West Africans, whether they professed Christianity or Islam. Blyden was a good example of the Negro who had had access to the intellectual traditions of the west, and as Agent for Native Affairs in Lagos, he strove to secure for Muslims the best possible education which would not conflict with the religion of Islam.[1.] To the end of his life he drew attention to the beneficial effects of Islam

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1. see supra, page 218.

on West African life, without ever becoming a Muslim. He believed that Islam encouraged indigenous and Negro oriented, scholarship, racial equality, unity, industry and abstinence. The lasting impression of his attitude to Islam, as indeed to Christianity, is one of pragmatism. He was not an uncritical sympathiser with Islam, but rather a committed pro-Negro patriot. Any religion which could provide support for the cause in which he believed was worth critical scrutiny, and - where it corresponded with his racial theory - was worth commending.

Miller was much more pedestrian by contrast. His work was solid and he achieved much in his chosen field of medicine. In education he was less successful, and in the wider field of administration, a field in which he felt that he had a contribution to make, he failed to gain the necessary support from his missionary society colleagues in London. Miller was pre-occupied with local issues. His vision seldom extended to include the world beyond his immediate environment. The issues which interested him had local habitations and local names, and he was effective in a local sense.

Of the three subjects of this study, it is Crowther who emerges as the man with the most profound understanding of what it meant to be a Christian or a Muslim in a West African setting. Lacking the intellectual polish of Blyden, and the European single-mindedness of Miller, he doggedly pursued a course which brought him personal attacks from fellow-Christians (white and black),

as well as from African Muslims and adherents of African traditional religion. His Christianity was firm and direct. He did not court popularity with Muslims by praising their religion. At times his criticism was pointed, and no doubt offensive, but the particularity of his Christian faith, and his courage in testifying to its doctrines, even commended him to those whose religious allegiance he made no secret of trying to change. His enduring importance lies precisely in this. He was a Christian witness among his own people, and among all whom he encountered. In his long and varied life there may be discerned a pattern for the kind of sacrificial living which is required of any Christian who attempts to enter the world of Islam with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Appendix A: An appreciation of E.W. Blyden, by E.D. Morel.

The Passing of a Great Figure.[1.]

Negro Africa has suffered irreparable loss in the death of Dr. Blyden, and the world is poorer for the disappearance of - we fear - the only pure-blooded Negro who was capable of applying his knowledge of Europe and White civilisation to the needs of Negro Africa and African civilisation. More fully versed in the literature and ethics of Europe than any other Negro, Blyden's studies only made him more of an African - more passionately the upholder of an Africa, the possessor of an African soul, an African culture; an Africa of clearly demarcated and peculiar racial needs.[2.] His preaching and teaching were ever directed to the same end; that Negro Africa, while taking all that was useful to her from Europe in material things, should, in so taking them, remain African and mould them to her own requirements, retaining her own spiritual life. He laboured to show that Africa had a soul and a civilisation - the latter worth preserving in itself, the former, if destroyed, leading to the destruction of the race.

Blyden like most prophets, was before his time. Although they felt proud of the place he had won and of its reflex action upon themselves, the bulk of educated West Africans did not

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1. E.D. M(orel), in an editorial in The African Mail, dated 16 February 1912; JHP, Box 12, file 4.

2. This sentence is inelegant, but stands as shown here.

understand or appreciate him. Some did, of course. "They would crucify me if they could", he once exclaimed bitterly. But the sentiment to which he thus gave interpretation was confined to the few. Most of them admired him as an intellectual force. Nevertheless, he preached in the wilderness. He was a pathetic figure, and yet a singularly impressive one - for he was so absolutely unique. In one sense Blyden was extraordinarily courageous. And yet, somehow, he failed to be the power he ought to have been, not so much among his own people - for them he was a misunderstood prophet, or rather, one should say, a prophet who pointed along a path strewn with sharp flints and prickly stubble - as a world-influence. How much that may have been due to his own defects of character, and how much to the handicaps with which he was surrounded, including lack of means (which he felt most poignantly),[1] he would be a bold critic who would venture a definite opinion. In any case, Blyden was a very remarkable man, with a wonderful personality - an ornament to the race from which he sprang, and whose blood he was ever proud to own. One feels despondently that he leaves no active pupils. On the other hand, his words will live, and his figure will grow with the years. One would fain hope that, now that he is dead, educated West Africans throughout West Africa, and the Mohammedan communities of Sierra Leone and Lagos, will combine to raise a fund to erect a statue to the greatest personality West Africa has produced

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1. Morel published an appeal, for money to be given to Blyden - "The Blyden Fund", in The African Mail, 10 July 1908; See supra, page 222, footnote 2.

in modern times, the greatest product of Western culture West Africa has ever produced, to the man whose racial patriotism burned with living fire, to the man who, through good repute and ill, concentrated upon the delivery of one message: "Africa be true to thyself".

Appendix B: The Isawa Mallams.

The following two transcriptions of taped material, recorded by Ian Linden from interviews with Isawa descendants, and sent to the present writer by letter, shed further light on the group which Miller tried to help.[1.]

1. From a Christian convert, Mallam Idi[2.] of Kano, then living in the Wusasa community.[3.]

'Our parents lived in Kano in a section called Tudun Madabo adjacent to Dutsen Dalla. Our parents were called Isawa the meaning of which is a disciple of Isa. We learnt about Isa from the Koran, but we did not fully understand until the arrival of people from the East, people from that big country in the middle of Arabia. They used to come to Kano to buy slaves and settled at Dandalin Turawa west of Dalla Hill. We lived east of Dalla. Our parents used to form a circle to say prayers and the group included both men and women. At that time a certain Sarki of Kano whose name I cannot recall used to throw our forefathers into prison. In the prison there were wells with spears in them. Once inside the prison the Isawa captives were pushed into the wells and the door shut on them. Kano prison today is situated east of the Sarkin's house but before it was at Gwalle, west of Mandawali. One famous amongst the Isawa, Mallam Ibrahim, a learned Mallam who feared God was caught and led to Jakara where he was killed by piercing a sharp stick through his anus to the mouth. This was done in the compound of Teyu's house.[4.] Teyu was an Arab and his house still stands to this day.. this made the Isawa desert Kano City. As we left Kano City we travelled south to Dawakin Tsakuwa and from there to Tsakuwa. Some of the Isawa went to Daba while some crossed the Daba river to Karwai. At Karwai a division of opinion occurred and some went to Bono in Rano district. Those that went to Bono soon left for Burum Burum and from there to Haskiya and Ikara, then to Kankanki. Isawa religion existed for a long time in Kano before it dispersed to other regions. To be a member of that religion in those days meant a lot of

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1. cf. supra, page 287.

2. cf. supra, page 310.

3. LIM, pp. 13-14, interview 13 August, 1974.

4. cf. the account given by Miller, WMRP, page 107, and supra, page 319.

suffering. A thief had more regard and respect paid him than an Isawa. To return to Karwai. Those that were at Karwai went to Tsakuwa Dol, and from there to Dura close to Ningi. There they met the Ningawa and men such as Dan Maje, Heruna and Dan Yahaya built up the strength of the Ningawa. In the past the Ningawa were under the authority of Bauchi but with the arrival of the Isawa they soon declared their independence and started to carry out slave raids to Katagum, Bauchi, Kano and Zaria... The religion of the Isawa is not new to us; we got it from the Koran, but we could not come out openly for fear of suffering. If you check in the Koran the sixth Izu, it is written 'Isa Ruhu Lahi'. Isa and God are the same, the spirit of God is God Himself. Isa is Ruhu Lahi; it is written so eight times in the Koran'.

2. Mallam Bulus Audu.[1]

'At the time when there were enemies, it was said that the knowledge (koyin) was received and kept. It was said here is this new egg, keep this new egg with care; you already have news of this new koyin; it is real; it will come... The Mallam from whom I got this knowledge was from Tsakuwa, from Kano, Mallam Yahaya. Mallam Ibrahim was the teacher in Kano. He was caught and impaled. When he was impaled his disciples left and found places to hide; my teacher followed them. He had relations in my home town, Mallam Yahaya. He ran away from Ningi, from Sarki Dan Yaya. He had a brother... from whom he requested a farm and this brother gave him land, but it was not enough and he came to the master of our house. When he came to Mallam Ali, our father, he said that we have enough land and he should be given some. He established his house in the place he was allotted. At that time, I knew nothing, I didn't know my right from my left... I was standing at the foot of the locust-bean tree; if it had not fallen it would be still standing. It was there that I got the message of God. I will never forget the spot until the day I die. I said "Mallam what shall I pay you to learn the reading"? He said: "My reward is in Heaven"... In the past we used to read, I was teaching them, we were followers, I had learned, I was the road, I was the root of Mallam Sadauki with his brother Mallam Kadiri... I told my parents that I was going to the Europeans, the message of God had arrived, the message of Christ the Messiah had arrived. My father said "No", "No", I would suffer, the Fulani would make me suffer, that I should be patient, that he knew what I intended but I should be patient and wait until he died. We spent four years and in the fifth

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1. LIM, pp. 15-16; recorded circa 1965.

year he died on a Thursday. Then I went to my mother, knelt down and said: 'If I have your agreement, the issue is already in my heart, you know of my sincerity, my parents'. They had accepted Islam but they agreed. No one argued any longer; they told me to go. I was with the disciples who I was teaching; they included Mallam Usman, Ibrahim the father of Ango of Kano, Mallam Musa the brother of Adamu, Mallam Inusa. I sent four to Durumin Mai Garke, Dr. Miller's mission in Zaria Old City. They went on a Sunday to Dr. Miller. That day all the disciples did not sleep for happiness. They had already known, they had already known of Christ the Messiah. They knew of his importance, they knew of his resurrection, they knew all about his wonderful deeds... then I came to this Mallam Dr. Miller and said I have come to learn more. "You have come to me? You have come to learn from me"? I said: "Forgive me Mallam, it is ignorance that has brought me here but it is not ignorance to come". "From where did you hear the story"? I said: "This was the reason, so and so, then we came to the place where Christ the Messiah rose..." Here Dr. Miller took over and finished the discourse. He knelt down and we prayed to God. He said that we were to pray: "God I thank you that your servants are hidden. I am thankful that you have heeded my prayers. I thank you that you have found this your people".

These testimonies appear to confirm such details as Miller himself provided, and to confirm his unique rôle in the story.

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A. PRIMARY SOURCES.

1. Mission Archives. Missionary records are rich sources of information about the work and attitudes of Crowther, Blyden and Miller. The fifty year rule of the Church Missionary Society has not materially affected the collection of detail about Miller. By the year 1930 his missionary work in Nigeria was virtually completed. During the following two decades he wrote several books which serve to confirm the analysis of his attitude to Islam made from an examination of the records which are available to the student.

(a) Church Missionary Society Archives. The files containing material relating to West Africa were originally housed in the Society's headquarters at 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU. In February 1979, these files (up to the year 1934) were transferred to the Heslop Room (Special Collections), in the Library of the University of Birmingham.

The personal files of European and African missionaries sponsored by the Church Missionary Society are classified as follows. The CA1/O series covers the history of the Sierra Leone Mission. Yorubaland was part of the Diocese of Sierra Leone until 1894. Lagos retained this connection until 1898. The Yoruba Mission is classified in the series CA2/O until 1880, when it is designated G3/A2/O. The Niger

Mission is classified CA3/O, until 1880, when it becomes G3/A3/O. From 1900 the Hausa Mission is classified as G3/A9/O. Prior to that date, papers and correspondence are found with the Niger Mission Papers.

(b) The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Blyden's links with the Presbyterian Church in the United States are recorded in the Annual Reports, which have been consulted on several visits to the Library of Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

2. Private Papers.

(a) The Papers of Sir John Pope Hennessy. Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

(b) The John Holt Papers. These are the papers recording the work of the Liverpool entrepreneur in West Africa. There is some interesting correspondence with Blyden. Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

(c) The Lugard Papers. Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

(d) The Diaries of the Rev. John Lowry Maxwell (30 vols., 10 October 1908 to 30 March 1949) record his work with the Sudan United Mission in Northern Nigeria. Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

(e) The Cecil Northcott Papers. These papers contain original correspondence, articles and essays, and photographs circa 1900-1940, relating to Miller. Originally in the possession of Miller's sister Edith, they were passed by her to the Rev. Cecil Northcott who was considering writing a biography of Miller. Northcott abandoned the idea, and then deposited the papers, together with items of his own correspondence and other papers about the proposed biography, with the C.M.S., at 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU.
(Accession 237).

(f) The Robinson Papers. An uncatalogued collection of papers on the work of C.H. Robinson in Hausaland.
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