

## LESSONS AND LEGACIES OF THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN SCOTTISH MISSIONS TO CONTEMPORARY MISSIONARY PRAXIS

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One of the greatest influences of modern history is what has been referred to as the Golden Age of World Missions. With missions considered to be one of the greatest secularizing agencies of this millennium, missionaries have been the most influential civilizing agents in human history. Beginning from the late eighteenth century, the missionary movement spread from western Europe to North America, South America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Alongside international traders, and the trade posts they had established, missionaries brought the gospel, education, and civilization to the peoples they encountered. One of the earliest and most influential of these missionary movements was the Scottish Missionary Society, established in 1796. While it was neither the first nor the largest mission agency of its time, Scottish missions nevertheless wielded a powerful influence in several countries, especially in India and Africa, and left behind an unquestionable legacy that is worthy of note and important as a study. Central to its legacy was its centrist biblicist position that influenced its mission theory and praxis. This paper will examine some of the lessons this remarkable period of history has for the practice of missions in our contemporary world, and the role Scripture and its interpretation played in the Scottish missions of that era, with a special focus on the African context.

### *History of Protestant Missions*

Protestant missions trace their origins back to the seventeenth century, when Protestant nations, seeking to establish new trade relations and colonies, sent out ministers serving as chaplains to various trading companies and military outposts.<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest tasks of some of these chaplains became the translation of Scripture into the vernacular of the local people. Later, cursory missionary activities followed. Pioneering missionary ventures, however, owe their existence to the Pietist movement and the influence of the writings of Philipp Jakob Spener and his book, *Pia Desideria*.<sup>2</sup> The first non-Roman Catholic missionaries sent from Europe to India at the instance of Ferdinand IV, King of Denmark, were Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau from Halle, Germany, since the king could not find suitable missionary candidates in his own country.<sup>3</sup> Besides King Ferdinand, who was a Pietist

<sup>1</sup>Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 41.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 194.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

himself, another group influenced by the Pietism in Halle was the Moravian Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*), who launched the most remarkable missionary movements ever seen in Christian history, taking the gospel to outposts in the Virgin Islands, Greenland, North America, South America, South Africa, and Labrador within the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The first missionary movement arising from the evangelical awakening of the eighteenth century, led by men like John and Charles Wesley, that sent out William Carey, “father of modern missions,” was the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792.

The London Missionary Society followed in 1795.<sup>5</sup> A year later the growth of evangelicalism in Scotland saw the organization of both the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) and the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS).<sup>6</sup> Up to fifty-seven missionary societies were established in Scotland between 1795 and 1825—two of these being women’s missionary societies.<sup>7</sup> However, the establishment of these missionary societies was not without resistance. The typical pattern, as church historian James Nichols observes, was through the means of voluntary associations that were more or less independent of the established churches of the day.<sup>8</sup> It will be helpful at this stage to briefly review the socio-cultural milieu in which the Scottish Missionary Society emerged. The following section examines some of these conditions.

#### *Scottish Context*

Kenneth Latourette in his seminal volumes on church history and missions paints the picture of a country whose economy, population, and living standards were on the rise during the period that followed the Industrial Revolution.<sup>9</sup> The cultural and intellectual florescence which peaked between the 1750s and 1790s came to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 99.

<sup>5</sup>Stuart Piggin, “The Expanding Knowledge of God: Jonathan Edwards’ Influence on Missionary Thinking and Promotion,” in *Jonathan Edwards: At Home and Abroad—Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 273.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Vol 1: The Nineteenth Century in Europe—Background and the Roman Catholic Phase* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), 185.

<sup>7</sup>John Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers: Enthusiast for Mission: The Christian Good of Scotland and the Rise of the Missionary Movement* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999), 259-260.

<sup>8</sup>James Hastings Nichols, *The History of Christianity 1650-1914: The Secularization of the West* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), 309.

<sup>9</sup>Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 182-183.

<sup>10</sup>Natasha Erlank, “‘Civilizing the African’: The Scottish Mission to the Xhosa,

The influence of the Enlightenment on Scotland was evident in the debates regarding missionary methods that raged in Scotland and England over which should have priority over the other, civilizing or evangelizing.<sup>11</sup> One unique feature of the missionary societies in Scotland was that they were composed of local associations of people who were interested in, and were enthusiastic for, mission.<sup>12</sup> It has been noted that “with the exception of the Established Church of Scotland, in no Protestant State church have missions been from their inception the concern of the church.”<sup>13</sup> It was the laity that was the driving force for mission in the churches of Scotland. Another notable feature that contributed to the missionary focus of this era was the Scottish form of Presbyterian Church government, which had the active participation of lay people, and as a result Scottish missions were largely lay-driven.<sup>14</sup>

*Spread of Scottish Missions*

The first overseas mission of both the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS) and the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) was to Sierra Leone in 1797, a mission that was described as “disastrous and short lived.”<sup>15</sup> Other mission outposts to which these combined agencies sent missionaries were Cape Colony, Kaffraria, India, and Jamaica, but only in South Africa and Jamaica were their labors crowned with success.<sup>16</sup> Scottish missionaries were also involved in missions to the Native Americans and the Middle East. In much later years through its educational institutions, Malawi<sup>17</sup> and Nigeria<sup>18</sup> were places that became major outposts of Scottish missions.

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1821-64,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 142.

<sup>11</sup>Ian Douglas Maxwell, “Civilization or Christianity: The Scottish Debate on Mission Methods, 1750-1835,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 124.

<sup>12</sup>Erlank, “Civilizing the African,” 146-147.

<sup>13</sup>Gustav Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1906), 84.

<sup>14</sup>Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 259.

<sup>15</sup>Erlank, “Civilizing the African,” 147.

<sup>16</sup>Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions*, 99.

<sup>17</sup>Harvey J. Sindima, *The Legacy of Scottish Missionaries in Malawi* (Wales, UK: Mellen Press, 1992), 18.

<sup>18</sup>William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria, 1846-1960* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1996), 14.

*Prominent Pioneers of Scottish Missions*

From the early days of the missionary movement Scotsmen have contributed significantly in shaping the methods and policies employed by the nascent societies. As notable church historian Andrew Walls explains, despite the establishment of the Scottish societies, the London Missionary Society secretariat in London was often dominated by expatriate Scottish ministers living in London and received a large proportion of missionary candidates from Scotland.<sup>19</sup> Between 1796 and 1842 one hundred and forty-five Scotsmen served as directors with the LMS (in various locations, such as Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow), with several of them serving for upwards of twenty years.<sup>20</sup>

Among the first Scottish missionaries sent to work with Native Americans was David Brainerd (1718-1747), whose journal became an inspiration to many future missionaries.<sup>21</sup> After an initial period of discouragement, Brainerd found success among the Indians in New Jersey; however, he soon succumbed to illness and died of consumption in the home of Jonathan Edwards.<sup>22</sup> It was Edwards who compiled and published Brainerd's missionary journal of his activities among the native Indians, a book that had a significant influence on the missionary movement of this era, thereby endowing upon Brainerd an iconic stature in Protestant missions.<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, himself a notable theologian, made an indelible mark on modern Protestant missions. His missionary paradigm is considered to have had seven connected facets—theology, history, philosophy, pragmatics, practice, spirituality, and aesthetics.<sup>24</sup> One person who was strongly influenced by Edwards' mission theology was Thomas Chalmers. Chalmers, while a student at St. Andrews, had read Edwards and was deeply impressed.<sup>25</sup> In his later years Chalmers returned as a lecturer to St. Andrews, where he taught for five years, during which time he influenced several of his students to sign up

<sup>19</sup>Andrew Walls, "The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening," in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 36.

<sup>20</sup>Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers*, 261-267.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>22</sup>Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 80-84.

<sup>23</sup>Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Historical Memory: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements and Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 253.

<sup>24</sup>Stuart Piggin, "The Expanding Knowledge of God: Jonathan Edwards' Influence on Missionary Thinking and Promotion," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements and Global Horizons*, edited by David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 267.

<sup>25</sup>Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers*, 40.

as missionaries, he headed the town missionary society, became president of the new St. Andrews Missionary Society, and was responsible for increased student enrollment in the classes he taught.<sup>26</sup> Among Chalmers' most notable students who also became missionaries was Alexander Duff. A graduate of St. Andrews, Duff was the first overseas missionary of the Church of Scotland who set sail for India and began ministry to the educated elite of India, the Brahmin, setting up schools where he combined education with evangelism.<sup>27</sup> Duff became a missionary statesman of great repute, who preached to the American Congress and even secured a private meeting with the president. Through his influence it is believed that tens of thousands volunteered for foreign missionary service.<sup>28</sup> Another pioneering missionary statesman worthy of mention is Henry Venn, who once served as the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). It was Venn who came up with the vision of churches in Africa that would be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating.<sup>29</sup> Venn ordained the first African bishop, Samuel Ajai Crowther, and responded to the call from David Livingstone for the establishment of a CMS mission in the southern region of Africa that led to the evangelization of Malawi.<sup>30</sup>

David Livingstone, an explorer and missionary, perhaps more than most missionaries greatly influenced the establishment of missions in the African continent. Also, the work of one woman must not pass unnoticed—Mary Slessor—a charismatic Scottish woman whose life and sacrifice are forever remembered in the southeastern region of Nigeria. There she influenced the establishment of technical schools for training locals, inspired and recruited single women to serve as missionaries in Calabar, Nigeria, and helped reconcile warring tribes.<sup>31</sup>

#### *The Bible's Role in Scottish Missions*

A discernable factor undergirding the Scottish missionary endeavor was the role that Scripture and its understanding played in that context. It is believed that a fresh approach to Scripture, alongside the evangelical preaching of men like George Whitehead and the Haldane brothers, was contributory to this movement.<sup>32</sup> One writer opines that Scotland at this stage of its history could be referred to as the “country of a book”—that book was the Bible.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers*, 198-206.

<sup>27</sup>Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 141-143.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>29</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 165.

<sup>30</sup>Sindima, *The Legacy of Scottish Missionaries*, 1.

<sup>31</sup>Taylor, *Mission to Educate*, 110, 103, 96.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 249.

<sup>33</sup>A. C. Cheyne, *Studies in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 124.

Church historian Alec Cheyne affirms that supreme among the factors that contributed to the greatness of the Scottish nation were the Scriptures.<sup>34</sup>

Bible Societies were established with the express purpose of producing and distributing translations in other languages. Walls explains that the Aberdeen Female Servants Society for Distributing Scriptures Among the Poor had a weekly subscription of a halfpenny; that played a critical role in raising the dignity of the poor by recognizing them as donors to a lofty cause.<sup>35</sup> The Bible Societies served to increase the support base and contributions for mission, and to increase interest in volunteers among the poor for missionary labor.<sup>36</sup>

A prime example of the role the Bible played in Scottish missions was demonstrated in the ministry of Alexander Duff in India. For the Scots, as Walls asserts, education was mission.<sup>37</sup> Duff observed that the secular education offered by the government of India and the British was corrosive and destructive and therefore saw the need to introduce a new component to education, the teaching of Scriptures, in order to provide an integrating worldview that would bring renewal to the Indian society.<sup>38</sup> Duff was a mission educationist who regarded science as “the record and interpretation of God’s visible handiworks,” and was reported to have told a staff to convert, “every fact, every event, every truth, every discovery into a means and an occasion of illustrating or corroborating sacred verities.”<sup>39</sup> For this reason Duff could be considered among the pioneers of integration of faith and learning, which is integral to religious education.

The other influence of Scripture in Scottish missions was evident in their educational institutions that recognized freedom of the human will and the equality of all humans, believing that both the heathen and missionaries were made in the image of God.

It is noteworthy that the Enlightenment introduced the concept of higher criticism, thus threatening to undermine traditional views regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture and making contrary positions appear quaint or unscholarly. However, for a good period of time higher criticism hardly had any influence on the average minister or parishioner.<sup>40</sup> It was not until much later that belief in the compatibility of faith and criticism

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 124.

<sup>35</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 233-234.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 234-35.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 265-66.

<sup>39</sup>Michael A. Laird, “Alexander Duff: 1806-1878: Western Education as Preparation for the Gospel,” in *Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, and James M. Phillips (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 272.

<sup>40</sup>Cheyne, *Studies in Scottish Church History*, 123.

became accepted; however, the leading theologians of the day never lost sight of the importance of the inspiration and authority of Scripture.<sup>41</sup>

*Legacies of Scottish Missions*

The work of the Scottish missions left enduring legacies in those regions where their operations were well established. Among the best-organized missions in the world were the Scottish Presbyterian missions, with their vast array of enterprises—evangelistic, medical, educational, industrial, and agricultural.<sup>42</sup> The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland particularly emphasized practical vocational education in their mission stations. Hope Waddell Training Institute, named after the first Presbyterian missionary to Calabar, was a prime example of this unique blend of education where the four R's were taught—reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, and religion—in addition to the vocational classes, which were to provide opportunities for developing the local economy.<sup>43</sup> David Livingstone's dream of industrial mission to replace slave trade as the major commerce in Africa was fulfilled through the establishment of schools where vocational skills and agriculture were taught in the Blantyre mission.<sup>44</sup> At Hope Waddell, among the courses offered to the men were carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, coopering, naval engineering, brickmaking, bricklaying, shoemaking and shoe-repairing, while the ladies were taught dressmaking, tailoring, domestic science, accountancy, and teacher-training for a while.<sup>45</sup>

Another important feature of Scottish missionary education was the egalitarian manner in which all who attended their schools were treated. Slaves and their owners were not only treated alike, sitting next to each other, but also instructed with identical lessons and given equal attention.<sup>46</sup> Also, an outstanding contribution of Scottish missions was their emphasis on learning and instruction in the local vernacular. This emphasis resulted in the production of written Yoruba—a factor that contributed to the educational progress of this group from Western Nigeria, giving them an edge over other tribes in the country. Scottish missionary Henry Venn was involved in the language-translation enterprise, which engaged the best linguistic expertise from Europe, such as that of Samuel Lee of Cambridge, German philologist Lepsius, and German missionary and language expert J. F. Schon.<sup>47</sup> Efik language also acquired an important place in Nigeria's language map, even though the tribe was small in comparison to others in the region. This

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 137-138.

<sup>42</sup>Neil, *A History of Christian Missions*, 327.

<sup>43</sup>Taylor, *Mission to Educate*, 225-226.

<sup>44</sup>Sindima, *The Legacy of Scottish Missionaries*, 56-58.

<sup>45</sup>Taylor, *Mission to Educate*, 128.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>47</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 160.

happened because Efik became the chosen language of instruction of the missionaries at the basic school level.<sup>48</sup>

Despite hagiographic controversies regarding the role of missionaries in the independence movements in Africa, it is clear that educational institutions established by Scottish missions in Nigeria and Malawi contributed in preparing students for leadership positions in the society and to serve as change agents in their respective communities. These schools, which trained locals to support the work of the missions, exerted effort to ensure that the students were not merely instructed intellectually, but also displayed moral rectitude.

Another important legacy of this period was the cardinal initiative of Alexander Duff, who proposed the establishment of a chair of evangelistic theology (known today as missiology) with a scope that would be “broad, catholic, and comprehensive;” this was to be in addition to a missionary institute that would respond to questions arising from the encounter of Christianity with other cultures.<sup>49</sup> Walls argues that the foundation for the studies of African history, political science, economics, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology are found in the proposal made by Duff for theological and cultural education of missionaries.<sup>50</sup>

From Malawi, where the Scottish missionaries established two missions, one named after Livingstone (Livingstonia), and his hometown (Blantyre), comes another missionary legacy—empathy for the traditional values of Africans and respect for the culture and people of the region.<sup>51</sup> Scottish missionary relations with African people appeared to be paradoxical; they manifested negative attitudes toward African religion and displayed a paternalistic stance toward local church leadership, yet it cannot be denied that the missionaries set themselves on a collision course with colonial government and contributed toward the struggle for national independence.<sup>52</sup> For instance, Frank Barlow, a Scottish missionary, deserves mention for helping restore land that had been unjustly appropriated in Kenya.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the support of missionaries to the colonialists on the issue of taxation portrayed the missionaries as collaborators with colonialists due to their insistence that locals should pay taxes to the colonial powers.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the nationals

<sup>48</sup>Taylor, *Mission to Educate*, 226.

<sup>49</sup>Andrew F. Walls, “Missiological Education in Historical Perspective,” in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 12-13.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>51</sup>Jack Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot* (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere Series, 2007), 152.

<sup>52</sup>Sindinma, *The Legacy of Scottish Missionaries*, 107.

<sup>53</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 99.

<sup>54</sup>Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 234-235.

could not understand why they needed to pay taxes, since they did not see how in any way these benefitted them.

Other aspects of Scottish missions that shaped and informed their success included the establishment of prayer societies, outgrowths of the evangelical awakening and the mobilization of laity to mission service, which resulted in the flowering of mission societies in that age.<sup>55</sup> Scottish missions were driven by the belief that “means” was an important factor in the success of missionary work—this “means” was prayer. Affirming this belief in the power of prayer is the quote attributed to John Eliot, missionary to the Native Americans: “it was in the power of pains and prayers to do anything.”<sup>56</sup>

Another remarkable heritage of the missionary movement is evident in the experience of women in missions. It was the mission field that uniquely opened the way for a new status for women in the church and society, culminating in what Walls refers to as the “increasing indispensability of the woman missionary.”<sup>57</sup> Another development of this period was the production and circulation of missionary literature among women, such as the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Quarterly Review*. As reports came in from the mission field, this helped generate interest in missions and provide the platform for volunteering opportunities in overseas missions.

While the golden age of missions may be history, the experience of those engaging in short-term missions indicates that another age of missions beckons. As churches carefully coordinate and report the encounters of Western youth in their vacation witnessing, the capacity for raising funds and volunteer personnel for these missionary programs will continue to expand exponentially.

#### *Lessons of the Scottish Missionary Movement*

Independence from colonial dominance brought an end to the century and a half of Scottish missions to Africa. Having briefly examined its enduring legacies, attention shall now be directed to the lessons they present for contemporary missionary praxis. One of the first lessons comes from the experience of missionaries in Ngoniland, Malawi. Following a period of drought and the futile attempts by local rainmakers to produce any results, the missionary Walter Elmslie was approached to pray for rain in the community. Although at first reluctant, Elmslie eventually made special prayers for rain on January 17, 1886, which resulted in slight showers that day, followed the next day by heavy rain.<sup>58</sup> The lessons from this experience are twofold: first, belief and confidence in the power of God to answer the prayers of his messengers is of great importance in mission contexts. Second, the response

<sup>55</sup>Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers*, 161.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>57</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 231.

<sup>58</sup>T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995), 51.

of missionaries for intervention in the affairs of the locals is also vital for successful missions.

Another lesson can be derived from the experience of the Scottish missionary David Fraser with the Ngoni people. By initiating a special thanksgiving service for farm crops, Fraser was able to establish an annual convention that brought together large numbers of the Ngoni people. This practice, which had precedence in the *incwala* gatherings that had welded the nation together in the past, and were often preceded by war raids, now had a Christian and functional purpose, resulting in rapid growth.<sup>59</sup> In missiology what Fraser did can be regarded as finding a functional substitute.

This is a clear demonstration that for Christianity to be established successfully in any land and among people groups there will need to be some sort of continuity and discontinuity. New Christian practices will in some way resonate with, or foreshadow, ancient ritual or religious customs; however, new beliefs will need to transform old practices and provide new interpretations with renewed significance. The burden therefore rests upon contemporary missionaries and missiologists to discover bridges with postmodern and unentered cultures in order to convey the rich and powerful themes of salvation in the Scriptures in relevant forms.

The lethargy, and in some cases reluctance, of missionaries to ordain local elders and leaders for churches provides another lesson opportunity. In certain cases, some local leaders left the mission churches to establish churches of their own, while among others the plaintive cry heard was: "Let me be ordained before we die."<sup>60</sup> The charge of paternalism has often been leveled against missionaries, many of whom expressed the conviction that Africans were incapable of leading themselves, even regarding them as children.<sup>61</sup> Strangely enough, echoes of this same charge of immaturity are still heard in different forms from some missionaries today, despite the records, which reveal that the spread of Christianity in Africa and Asia was largely the result of indigenous workers.

The process of Bible translation into vernacular languages, an enterprise that contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity, also has important lessons for contemporary practice of missions. Just as Bible translation involved collaboration between missionaries and local translation assistants, even so today the new paradigm of missionary praxis calls for collaboration and interdependence. It needs to be recognized that multiple competencies are required for effective missions and that all the players involved bring to the table qualities that are direly needed in the global task of gospel propagation in this complex age. As with the human body all parts are equally important (Rom 12:4-8); in missions, every race, gender, and talent are needed today for the task of global evangelization.

<sup>59</sup>Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*, 91-93.

<sup>60</sup>Sidinma, *The Legacy of Scottish Missionaries*, 87-88.

<sup>61</sup>Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 99.

Incidentally, the emergence of African Independent, or Indigenous Churches (AICs), was triggered by the scorn and disdain displayed by the mission churches toward local beliefs, and the lack of sensitivity to their culture and people. From this episode one can infer that great knowledge of the entire Scriptures, with comprehensive understanding of local languages, and even the willingness to be martyred, are not as important as mutual respect, humility, and love for all people. In this regard the comment of the sage Andrew Walls rings so true: “The missionary movement was a great learning experience for Western Christianity.”<sup>62</sup>

Finally, one of the greatest impulses for mission was the goal of civilization. For Scottish missionaries education was the vehicle through which this objective could be attained. Western education was regarded as *praeformatio evangelica*, that is, a means to make the locals receptive to the gospel.<sup>63</sup> Another powerful motivation was the conviction that more rapid evangelization of the world would hasten the Lord’s coming; a belief derived from a literal interpretation of Matt 24:24, which was also the watchword of the Student Volunteer Movement of that period.<sup>64</sup> An important question to consider in contemporary missions is, What in our times should constitute the motive for missions? African missiologist Tite Tienou cautions that missionary appeals, especially in the African context, should never be premised on pity.<sup>65</sup> Such a condescending standpoint, besides creating rice-Christians, could ultimately result in a repeat of past mistakes. One motivational concept that should prove successful in our age is disinterested benevolence. Christ in his life exhibited disinterested benevolence as He healed, delivered, forgave, and blessed simply because that was His nature to do so, and not because of any ulterior motive. Similarly, this must have been reflected in the life and ministry of David Livingstone, who so identified with Africans that he was regarded as a brother by the people he came in contact with. When mission is premised upon the recognition that all humans reflect the image of God and therefore all are special in His sight, it will influence one’s devotion and commitment to humbly work as collaborators with recipients of the gospel.

From the flowering of mission agencies during the era of missionary movements, another important lesson to be learned is that there is room enough for various specialized societies, agencies, and missions even today. Each agency responds to a special need and fills a unique niche according to the calling and direction of the Lord. Also, just as the various societies thrived for a significant period of time during the missionary era, present-day

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 258.

<sup>63</sup>Laird, “Alexander Duff,” 271.

<sup>64</sup>Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*, 77.

<sup>65</sup>Tite Tienou, “The Training of Missiologists for an African Context,” in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 99.

missionaries need to learn that wherever there is a need, God will provide the resources to accomplish the task

Noteworthy also are the critical roles played not just by the men, but especially by women and youth of that period. Missions will experience great advancement even today when women and youth join forces to embrace and expand the frontiers of mission. Of particular interest is the fact that the Ivy League universities in America, and in Britain, played crucial roles in recruiting and establishing volunteers for the missionary movement back then. Perhaps the time is ripe once again for another great awakening to commence among postmoderns dissatisfied with the pleasures and distractions this life offers and from those renowned campuses originally established for missionary training.

The legacies of Scottish missions are numerous; they include: the emphasis on holistic missions, egalitarian educational curricula, the benefits of vernacular in missions, evangelization to produce character formation, the value of practical theology, the role of prayer groups, and the indispensability of women in missions. The lessons contemporary missionaries may learn from Scottish missions include: contextualized ministries employing functional substitutes are needed for successful evangelization, training, and empowerment of local leadership, which is vital to enduring missions; collaboration and cooperation should be a new paradigm for missions; disinterested benevolence should be the motivation for contemporary missions, and spiritual reawakening, which involves women and youth, especially around campus settings, is again needed to launch a fresh wave of missions.

Perhaps the most remarkable offshoot of the missionary age is the great shift in world Christianity that has resulted in Africa, Asia, and Latin America emerging as major players in this religion. It could be that the greatest condition for successful missions in our postmodern, globalized world is the unfettered participation in the Great Commission of those who once were recipients of the exorbitant sacrifice of missionary lives. More voices seem to be rising in support of this view today.