

**AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARIES TO EAST AFRICA
1900-1926: A STUDY IN THE ETHNIC RECONNECTION OF THE GOSPEL**

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**A thesis presented to the
University of Edinburgh
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

October 1998



Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and constitutes the results of my research in this subject.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact African American missionaries had on the ethnic reconnection between African Americans and East Africans. Their role in the evangelization of Africa has long been overlooked by historians and this research seeks to correct this disparity. Well before the end of slavery in the USA there was a desire among African Americans to send missionaries to Africa. Approximately 600 of these missionaries went to Africa between 1820 and 1980. Seventy-five percent went to West Africa, 50% went to Liberia alone. The remaining 25% went to South, Central and East Africa. The missionaries who went to East Africa (i.e. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Eastern Zambia) are the focus of this research.

This research begins with a historical overview of African American missions. George Liele was the first documented African American missionary from the USA. Liele went to Jamaica from Savannah, Georgia in 1783. Lott Carey, who went to Liberia in 1821, was the first African American Baptist missionary to Africa. The purpose of this overview is to give the reader a context from which to comprehend the subsequent chapters.

The next three chapters represent the major body of this research. They identify the key factors that motivated African American missionaries to go to East Africa. Factors such as calling from God, race, African identity and education are evaluated. The preparatory training of these missionaries is evaluated as is the external influences of Booker T. Washington and J.J. Coles. The similarities in ancestry, race and some cultural expressions of music are contrasted with differences in education and views of western culture. African perceptions of these missionaries are evaluated along with the perceptions of western missionaries and colonial officials. A discussion of their attitudes towards Islam and African traditional religions is included as is an evaluation of the reasons why they returned to the USA. The changes these missionaries experienced in their cultural understanding of East Africa influenced their understanding of African identity, the gospel and their desire to return to Africa. Their readjustments to American culture are evaluated along with how they maintained their connection with East Africa through letters, literature, fund-raising, and helping Africans come to the USA for education.

A chapter on the International Missionary Council conference at Le Zoute, Belgium in 1926 follows. This conference was primarily about education in Africa. However, African American mission secretaries hoped to use the conference to gain access to portions of Africa closed to them by colonial governments. This conference was a disappointment from the perspective of African American missionaries because although it promised access to Africa for these missionaries, the tangible results were minimal.

This research concludes by evaluating two examples of African missionaries who represented the way forward for African American missions in Africa. They were Daniel Sharpe Malekebu, missionary to Malawi and Ernest Balintuma Kalibala, missionary to Uganda. In spite of their small numbers and the comparative shortness of their service in Africa, African American missionaries had an influence both at home and abroad that was much greater than their numerical strength might indicate.

Acknowledgements

My appreciation first goes to my supervisors, Dr. Jack Thompson, Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (CSCNWW) and Professor Kenneth King, Centre of African Studies (CAS), for their constructive direction of my work. Our joint tutorials were like mini-examinations and always left me with clear direction about my work.

I would also like to express special thanks to Professor George Shepperson whose friendship and scholarly advice on sources greatly helped and encouraged me. I am glad to be an honorary member of the 'Sampire' along with all his former students. Professor Andrew Walls' early interest in my topic of research influenced me to come to Edinburgh. His continued interest and willingness to assist me with input greatly benefited my research and my personal growth. I appreciated the CSCNWW purchasing the microfiche of the International Missionary Council conference at Le Zoute, Belgium. Having access to these files saved me considerable time and expense.

Professors J. Deotis Roberts, Sylvia Jacobs and Dean Lawrence Jones, scholars in the USA, gave me valuable input and encouragement for which I am grateful.

A key part of my research was archival in nature and I acknowledge most gratefully the financial aid I received from numerous churches and friends in the USA to help fund my visits to these archives. I also benefited from the assistance of many people who work in these archives. Employees in the CSCNWW, Miss Margaret Acton, Mrs. Elizabeth Leitch, Mrs. Anne Fernon and Mrs. Ruth Scott, answered my questions about research and about Scotland without fail. Their insights helped make my time in Edinburgh both fruitful and enjoyable.

The entire New College Library staff displayed great patience with my constant requests for materials. I would like to say a special thanks to Mr. Paul

Coombs and Mrs. Norma Henderson for their patience and diligence in handling my requests. I would also like to say a special thanks to Dr. Murray Simpson in the Edinburgh University Library Special Collections for assisting me in gaining access to documents not normally available to the public.

During a visit to the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, Mrs. Rosemary Seton assisted me in gaining access to the International Missionary Council files and for this I am grateful.

Professor Khalil Mahmud, archivist at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, was most helpful in giving me access to that school's records and sending me materials by post. Mrs. Joellen ElBashir, archivist at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, greatly assisted me in getting access to the letters of Max Yergan located there.

My weekly prayer partners for the past three years, Dr. John Mokili and Rev. Andrew Rollinson, were the source of untold encouragement while doing this study. Likewise, I will never forget the fellowship of the members of Morningside Baptist Church, Edinburgh who provided a rich source of proof-readers. This church also provided warm fellowship and opportunities to minister that made my family's time in Edinburgh a growing experience that we will always cherish.

Thanks are also due to my parents, Clyde and Maizie Orr, who taught me the value of education and persistence which were the foundations for many of the ideas in this research.

My warmest thanks are due to my wife, Cortina, whose encouragement and devotion, I can never repay. I also appreciate my daughter, Ariel and my son, Bradley, whose creative play helped me to relax from my studies.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the continued spread of the Gospel in Africa and the world.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ABFMB | American Baptist Foreign Mission Board |
| AME | African Methodist Episcopal Church |
| AMEZ | African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church |
| ARSH | <i>Advent Review and Sabbath Herald</i> |
| BCA | British Central Africa |
| BEA | British East Africa |
| CAS | Centre of African Studies |
| CME | Christian Methodist Episcopal Church |
| CSCNWW | Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World |
| CWM | Council for World Mission |
| EUL | Edinburgh University Library |
| IMC | International Missionary Council |
| LCC | Lott Carey Convention |
| LHL | Langston Hughes Library |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| LOC | Library of Congress |
| MEC | Methodist Episcopal Church |
| MECS | Methodist Episcopal Church South |
| MH | <i>Mission Herald</i> |
| MSRC | Moorland-Spingarn Research Center |
| NBCFMB | National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board |
| NLS | National Library of Scotland |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| PCUS | Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) |
| PHS | Presbyterian Historical Society |
| PIM | Providence Industrial Mission (Malawi) |
| PRO | Public Records Office |
| Schomburg | Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture |
| SDA | Seventh-day Adventists |
| SOAS | School of Oriental and African Studies |
| SUL | Shaw University Library |
| UNIA | Universal Negro Improvement Association |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association |

A NOTE ON SPELLING

Since the subject of this thesis is African American missions and the majority of the quotations used follow American English usage and spelling, I have decided to use American spelling throughout this work except where original quotations, book titles, etc. use British English spelling.

LIST OF MAPS AND CHARTS

Map of African American Missionaries to East Africa, 1900-1926, on page 49, developed from *Africa Today: An Atlas of Reproducible Pages*, New York: World Eagle, Inc., 1983.

Chronological chart of African American missionaries to East Africa, on page 54.

INTRODUCTION

On 1 May 1873 David Livingstone died in Chitambo's village near Lake Bangweolo in what is now Zambia.¹ Reports of his experiences in Africa particularly impressed a boy by the name of Booker Taliaferro Washington who was working in a coal mine in West Virginia. Born a slave in 1856 in Franklin County, Virginia to a slave mother and a white father, Washington went on to graduate from Hampton Institute. He later became the founder and president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He admits that his views about Africa were not based on any first hand information. This was most likely the experience of many missionaries prior to going to Africa as well as many African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. Washington wrote in 1913 of his early impressions of Africa:

I knew at that time that there was a place called Africa, and that many years before a white man had brought my mother's people across the ocean from that part of the world to work as slaves upon the plantations. I have seen in an old geography a picture of a wild man with a ring in his nose, who was supposed to represent the African race. What else I learned from white people and black people about Africa and its inhabitants did not inspire me with any particular interest or enthusiasm.

Although I knew almost nothing beyond the name about the dark continent and its people, I was very thoroughly convinced that Africa was a place filled with dreadful savage black people who wore hardly any clothes and that the conditions of the African people, from whom I had sprung, was a kind of disgrace to me and the other people of my race in America, and that the less said about the matter the better.

¹ Reginald Coupland, *Livingstone's Last Journey* (London: Collins, 1945), 245.

Still, deep down in my heart, I always had a desire to know something more about the land and people from which the black man in America had originally come, and as I grew older that desire increased. I could not help feeling that a race that was able to produce women as good and as kind as my mother must have something about it worth knowing.²

Some African Americans³ of that period would probably have disagreed with Washington's negative assessment of Africa, but most were probably as poorly informed as he was at that time. Washington even admits in this article that his mother gave him his first positive impressions of his African heritage. It was she who instilled in him his first feelings of hope that his African ancestry could offer something of which he could be proud. However, he goes on to explain that Livingstone's discoveries were the key that unlocked his hope for a positive African identity. Washington wrote the following about Livingstone:

He not only gave his life, but he gave a new continent to civilization. Incidentally he did something for the American negro. He taught him to know and sympathize with and respect his brothers in Africa. The story of Livingstone's life brought to me, as to many other colored people in this country, not only the first real knowledge of Africa and the African people but the first definite interest in them....

In the accounts of his later travels, we were stirred by the terrible pictures he drew of the slave trade and touched by the profound sympathy which the casual references of his last diary exhibit for these unfortunate black people and their suffering.

In calling attention to the horrors of the Portuguese and Arab slave traffic he stirred the conscience of Europe; in making the negro people in this country

² Booker T. Washington, 'David Livingstone and The Negro,' in *International Review of Missions*, vol. 2, no. 6, April 1913, 224. It should be noted that Washington wrote this article two years before his death in 1915 and he is discussing the impact of Livingstone who had died 40 years earlier (1873). In spite of this, his comments about Livingstone's impact on African Americans' perspective on Africa are still valuable because Washington was a powerful voice for African Americans at that time.

³ Although many quotes in this research use the terms, Colored, Negro and Black to describe Americans of African descent, African American will be generally used in this text.

acquainted, to some extent, with the native African he established a bond of sympathy between the two branches of the race which has grown stronger from year to year....

The thing that has touched me most, in what I have been able to learn of Livingstone's life, has been the unfailing sympathy and understanding which he has shown in all his writings for what I call, 'the point of view' of the peoples with whom he came in contact.⁴

Livingstone's discoveries obviously stirred Washington's sense of his African identity. This was translated into a desire on Washington's part to become a missionary to Africa, a dream that he never fulfilled. However, this vision for Africa led him to help many others, both Africans and African Americans, to go to Africa or to come from there to study at Tuskegee.⁵

Not only did Livingstone inspire African Americans like Washington to consider Africa, but according to Henrietta Branch, Seventh-day Adventists missionary to Malawi, Livingstone also made Africans aware of African Americans. She wrote in a letter in 1904 about Livingstone's legacy among the people she encountered in Malawi:

He [Livingstone] told them that there were friends and relatives on the other side of the great, deep ocean, who would some day come to help them. This they have never forgotten. When we arrived, they came from far and near to see us, whom they call their big brothers from America.⁶

The significance of this observation by Branch was that the people whom she met claimed that Livingstone had told them that one day their relatives would come

⁴ Washington, 'David Livingstone,' 226, 227.

⁵ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of The Negro*, (London: T. Fisher Urwin, 1909) 37. See chapter 4 footnote 47 for a further statement of Washington's intent to become a missionary.

⁶ Henrietta Branch letter in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 23, 1904, 14.

to aid them. It was also significant that the Branches were identified by them as being the ones Livingstone said would come.

Livingstone revealed to the world the shocking news that slavery was still in full force in East Africa. On his gravestone in Westminster Abbey, his words concerning the slave trade are recorded, “All I can add in my solitude is may heaven’s rich blessing come down on every one, American, English or Turk who will help to heal this open sore of the world.”⁷ This news came at a time when the pain from the ‘open sore’ of USA slavery was still fresh in the minds of many African Americans. W.E.B. DuBois, editor of *Crisis* magazine, even compared Livingstone’s contribution to that of the slave liberator, Harriet Tubman:

Both these sincere souls gave their lives for black men. One explored Africa, but did not stop with lake and mountain, but saw and knew the human hearts that beat in those dark bodies and tried to make a deaf world realize that they were fellow men.”⁸

Ninety years before Livingstone’s death, African American missions began in 1783 when former slave George Liele went to Jamaica as a Baptist missionary.⁹

What Livingstone contributed to African American missions, according to Washington, was to add fuel to the fire for missions that already existed in that community.

⁷ His gravestone also states, ‘For thirty years his life was spent in an unmeasured effort, To evangelize the native races, To explore the undiscovered secrets, To abolish the devastating slave trade of Central Africa.’ Taken from G.A. Gollock *Lives of Eminent Africans* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1928), 48.

⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, editorial, *Crisis*, vol. 6, no. 1, May 1913, 18.

⁹ The beginning of African American missions will be discussed in chapter 1.

As William J. Harvey III, corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, wrote about Livingstone's impact on his own African American mission board, "In answer to the need unearthed by Livingstone's exploration, in 1900 your Foreign Mission Board established the Providence Industrial Mission [Malawi]. Miss Emma B. DeLaney, the same lady who braved the bush and labored like a man to build Suehn in Liberia, began her mission work in Chiradzulu."¹⁰ Livingstone's role in motivating African Americans to become missionaries may have been unwitting, but his discoveries made many of them think about what could be done for Africa.

The many facets of the ethnic connections between Africans and African Americans will be defined in this thesis as ethnosynthesis.¹¹ This word describes the ethnic reconnection between African Americans and East Africans¹² who realized, that although slavery had separated them as a people, there was still a synthesis or marriage between the two in terms of culture and identity. The reconnection between the two began by the missionaries who went to East Africa and the Africans who

¹⁰ William J. Harvey III, *Sacrifice and Dedication in a Century of Missions, 1880-1980* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, Inc., 1979), 92.

¹¹ For an initial exploration of the ethnosynthesis concept see the seminar paper entitled, 'Defining the Ethnosynthesis caused by the preaching of the Gospel,' presented by the author at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 3 February 1998. Professor James Deotis Roberts stated concerning the concept of ethnosynthesis, 'The way you have developed the concept is akin to Hegel's dialectical formula.' and Professor Emeritus John O'Neill states, 'What you want to describe is most interesting: the action of sending out missionaries and hearing their reports changes the sending church. It's very hard to express all that with one word; Hegel wrestled with your very problem. Scientists are also wrestling with it when they try to describe the fact that the presence of an observer changes the nature of what is observed.' Ethnicity fits this research because its definition includes both race and cultural identity which are both key factors in the reconnection between Africa and African Americans.

¹² For the purpose of this research, East Africa includes the countries of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi and Eastern Zambia.

later came to America resulted in a clearer understanding of the common African identity of both groups.

African American historian, Sylvia Jacobs, states that of the 250,000 to 350,000 American missionaries who went to Africa between 1820-1980 approximately 600 were African Americans. Seventy-five per cent of African American missionaries went to West Africa with almost 50 per cent going to Liberia alone.¹³ An obvious explanation for their focus on West Africa might be that most of the slaves brought to America were taken from West Africa.¹⁴ Therefore, it follows that African American missionaries would return there first. This is particularly true of Liberia which as an independent country since 1847 welcomed these missionaries. A natural result of this focus on West Africa as a mission location was that most research on African American missionaries has been on West Africa.

This thesis proposes to look at the African American missionaries who went to East Africa. No comprehensive work has yet been written on this topic.¹⁵ Most of the current research has covered a geographical portion of Africa or a denominational group. There is no doubt that a comprehensive work on African American missionaries is needed, but this research will investigate only those who went to East

¹³ Sylvia M. Jacobs, 'African Missions and the African American Christian Church,' *Encyclopedia of African American Religion*, eds. Larry G. Murphy, J. Gordon Melton, and Gary L. Ward (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 22. These figures were developed by Jacobs and are the basis for a future biographical dictionary of African American missionaries.

¹⁴ For an analysis of the Atlantic slave trade see, Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

¹⁵ Although the period of this research is 1900-1926, some of the missionaries in this research traveled to East Africa before 1900 and some returned there after 1926. These dates are not seen in this research as being exclusive of the impact these missionaries had outside this period of time, but serve as general parameters that all these missionaries fall with in at one time or another.

Africa from 1900-1926 as a contribution to this ultimate work. The African American involvement in East Africa is an important link needed for a comprehensive work to be written.

The year 1900 was chosen as the beginning of this period of research because it follows the research of African American historian Walter Williams entitled, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900*. Williams' research traced African American missionaries who went primarily to West, Central and South Africa during his period of research. Using original writings of African American missionaries and documents of their sponsoring mission agencies, Williams evaluated the motivations and experiences of these missionaries. He did not study East Africa in his research probably because records of African American missionaries to East Africa prior to 1900 are scarce. This research will extend Williams' work into the twentieth century and into East Africa.

This research begins with a brief history of African American missions to give the reader a background of the chapters that follow. Then it defines the reconnection brought about by African American missionaries to East Africa and introduces chronologically the missionaries' work and context. This is followed by an evaluation of the motivation of African American missionaries and their impact upon Africans and African Americans. Did they see themselves as expatriates or repatriates? Were they trying to escape racism in the USA? Were they emigrants or missionaries, pan-africanists or cultural imperialists?

The year 1926 was chosen as the close of this research because of a major conference held that year at Le Zoute, Belgium, sponsored by the International

Missionary Council. Although this conference was seen primarily by European and American mission boards as dealing with education in Africa, this research will look at it from the perspective of the African Americans attendees.

Finally, this research will look at two examples of the way forward for African American missions in East Africa. It will evaluate the role that Daniel Sharpe Malekebu, from Malawi and Ernest Balintuma Kalibala, from Uganda, played in the reconnection between Africa and African Americans.

The choice of this research topic was influenced by my twenty years of experience as an African American missionary, three of which were spent teaching at a seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1991-1994. Although my initial calling to missions was much broader than one geographical location, East Africa has a special place in my heart. Living in Ethiopia from 1970-1972 helped me understand some of my own African heritage. It was an educational experience that sometimes left me feeling like a foreigner in both Africa and America. It raised the somewhat uncomfortable question, "where exactly could I feel at home?" I felt caught between two cultures with no place to settle down. This experience helped me become more sensitive to different cultures and to become comfortable with a multicultural identity. Thus the ideas of African identity and cultural connection were important issues in my own missionary experience.

Education was also a key motivating factor in my preparation for missionary work as I chose to go to Kenya as a seminary lecturer. This required me to pursue further education as a missionary before departing the USA. Having a great-grandfather who was refused an education because of his race, left a legacy in my

family of the importance of education. Any family member who has the opportunity to further his/her education is accountable to take advantage of it.

Though I did not realize it at the outset of this thesis, I now see a similarity between my experience as an African American missionary in East Africa and that of the African American missionaries I have studied. I chose this topic because of the lack of information concerning African American missionaries who went to East Africa and I hope to encourage others to consider missions as a career.

The major difficulty in collecting documentation on these missionaries was discovering where to find the historical materials. Written evidence about these missionaries was scarce in East Africa itself. The Cheek and Delaney papers were destroyed at the Providence Industrial Mission when it was blown up by British authorities following the Chilembwe uprising in 1915.¹⁶ The YMCA Kenya archives did not have any information on early 20th century African American missionaries that had not already been deposited in the World Alliance of the YMCA archives in Geneva.¹⁷ Many of the other missionaries who stayed a longer period left their letters and journals with their missions. For example the letters of the Hemans, who

¹⁶ According to MacFord Chipuliko, chairman of the Providence Industrial Mission, Chiradzulu, Malawi in a letter to the author dated 20 September 1996, 'The records of Miss Emma Delaney and Rev. L.N. Cheek are not available here. I understand that most of the papers were destroyed in [the] 1915 uprising and in the silent period of 1916 to 1926 when this station was reopened. There are stories about these people in the old *Mission Herald Magazine* in Philadelphia.' There are numerous letters and articles on these missionaries in early issues of the *Mission Herald* as well as in the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board archives. This partially explains why most of the research on African American missionaries was done in the USA and European archives.

¹⁷ Claude-Alain Danthe was helpful in taking me through the archives in Geneva and showing me what he had of the Kenya YMCA historical records. My repeated letters to the YMCA in Nairobi, Kenya requesting information went unanswered.

ministered for 18 years in Africa, are currently located at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. This is why European archives were important to this research. Some East Africans may still be alive who remember these missionaries; however, this research relies primarily on letters, diaries and journals of these missionaries and people who knew them. Most of these documents are located in denominational, university and public archives in the USA and Europe.¹⁸ Some of these documents were in poor condition and badly in need of conservation. This shows how important it is for this research to be completed. It is hoped that this research will encourage those desiring to do further research on this topic.

The greatest disappointment of this research was being refused access to the papers of YMCA secretary, Max Yergan, who died in 1975. His papers (39 boxes) located in Howard University Library, Washington, D.C., are closed to the public at the request of his family.

In spite of these difficulties this research uncovered a number of sources for further study of African American missions. Investigating African American missionaries in European archives provided a fresh perspective on this topic.

The Public Records Office in London has significant information on the thinking of colonial officials who wanted to keep African Americans out of their territories during the period of this research. Additionally visits to the World Council of Churches archive and the World Alliance of the YMCA archive in Geneva gave an added perspective to this work.

¹⁸ The report of the author's two month, 5,000 mile research trip to the USA to collect archival information on African American missionaries is available in his files.

The papers of YMCA secretary to East Africa, William H. Simons, located in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. were valuable sources of information. Simons' family deposited his papers there in 1989.

The impact that African American missionaries had on Africa was significant not because of the number of missionaries who went there, but because of the identity that they brought with them. The presence of these missionaries in Africa was often short term, but if the visual impact that educated African Americans had on East Africans could be measured, it may well have been their greatest contribution.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact African American missionaries had on the ethnic reconnection between African Americans and East Africans. In spite of their small numbers the impact that they had has to be measured not only by what they did while in East Africa, but what they did when they returned to the USA.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONS

The Christian Church is a missionary enterprise, and when it loses its impulse to propagate itself by carrying the Gospel of the Lord, its unique distinction will be gone. Realizing this fact, very shortly after the beginning of the African M.[Methodist] E.[Episcopal] Church, the early Fathers were fired with a holy zeal to extend its borders and range of influence.¹

George A. Singleton

The topic of African American missionaries to Africa may not be well known even to the informed reader of missions history. Therefore, this chapter will give a general overview of the history of African American missions and missionaries to Africa. Some African American missionaries went to Africa under African American mission boards, some went under white mission boards and some went as self-supporting missionaries. Starting from the beginning of slavery in North America up until the beginning of the period covered by this research, this chapter will give the reader a context from which to understand this work.

The spread of Christianity among the slaves of North America begins with slavery itself. According to historian, Peter Duignan, “The first documented sale of black captives dates from 1619, when twenty Africans arrived on a Dutch ship.”² These were most likely indentured servants who had agreed to work for a specific period and not for perpetuity. Although it is impossible to know the exact numbers, one reasonable estimate of the distribution of slaves to the Americas was made by

¹ George A. Singleton, *The Romance of African Methodism* (New York: Exposition Press, 1952), 68.

² Peter Duignan and L.H. Gann, *The United States and Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 15.

historian, Philip Curtin, who states that 4.5 per cent of all slaves imported during the Atlantic slave trade went to the USA. This is compared with 16.9 per cent that were sent to the Caribbean and 38 per cent to Brazil.³ Historian, Albert Raboteau, states, “The slave population in the USA had an amazingly large rate of natural increase. By emancipation in 1865, the slave population had increased to ten times the number imported.”⁴ Contrasted with this is Brazil, whose close proximity to Africa made a continuous supply of slaves more accessible. In addition to Brazil’s tropical climate which probably contributed to the slave’s mortality, it had a brand of slavery which considered slaves as expendable capital. However, slaves to the USA were seen as expandable capital and were therefore cared for and bred in many cases like livestock.⁵ As their numbers multiplied so did their overall value to their masters.⁶ The production of white sugar and the development of the cotton gin also multiplied the value of the slave trade in the Americas.

³ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 88,89. According to Curtin, Haiti received 9.0% of the Atlantic slave trade, Jamaica 7.8% and Cuba 7.3%. Each of these islands in the Caribbean imported far more slaves than the USA did according to Curtin. Curtin says of these figures, “Their value is not in being correct, but in being correct enough to point out contradictions in present hypotheses and to raise new questions for comparative demography and social history.’ p. 93.

⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, ‘African Religions in America’, in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), 71.

⁵ Vincent B. Thompson, *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas, 1441-1900* (Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1989), 135. Thompson states of the sale of slaves, ‘Often in the Americas when the slave ships reached port their cargoes were brought on deck for purchase. Sometimes auctions were announced in advance for a later date, but once the sale commenced the purchaser examined the slaves for defects, and this they did with a curiosity similar to that which one might witness during a first encounter with a horse or mare or ox.’

⁶ *Ibid.*, 198. Thompson states of this multiplication of slaves in the Americas, ‘Furthermore, as some slaves born on the plantation tended to endure well and become more acclimatised to climatic conditions than those freshly imported from Africa, the practice of slave breeding found another rationale....But one of the major factors responsible for this internal production of slaves was the acute labour shortage.’

Booker T. Washington, former president and founder of Tuskegee Institute, states in, *Up From Slavery*, “I say, not to justify slavery - on the other hand, I condemn it as an institution, as we all know that in America it was established for selfish and financial reasons, and not from a missionary motive.”⁷ In other words the idea of Providential Design, held by many whites and even some African Americans during the 18th century, stated that God designed slavery to Christianize a pagan African people and then through missions send them back to Africa to evangelize that continent. This tended to justify the greed, selfishness and lack of regard for human life that were the motivating factors behind the slave system. According to historian, Bengt Sundkler, huge profits were made by those investing in the business of slavery. Sundkler states, “There were large sums of money involved. Between 1783-1793, 880 slave-ships left Liverpool, carrying over 300,000 slaves worth more than £15 million. The annual net profits of the slave trade were 30 per cent.”⁸ Even in the wake of the ravages of the Revolutionary War, Britain and America as did other countries, continued reaping significant financial profit from world-wide slave trading.

The introduction of Christianity to the slave population in the USA was slow for a number of reasons. Understandably, the cruelty of slavery made it difficult for many slaves to comprehend their masters’ religion. Even a so-called ‘kind master’

⁷ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, (London: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1900, 1928), 16,17. Thompson supports Washington’s statement, ‘In developing the New World it became clear from an early stage that the successful pursuit of wealth, whether in mining for precious metals or in plantation agriculture, demanded a supply of dependable and cheap labour.’ p.19

⁸ Bengt Sundkler, *The World of Missions* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), 147.

was unable to isolate his slaves from the horrors of the wider slave system. Often when faced with financial difficulty, he found it easy to liquidate his slaves on the auction block rather than set them free. As historian Vincent Thompson states, “It is impossible to read the lives of former slaves such as Frederick Douglass, Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano, and many others, without coming face to face with the inhuman suffering and cruelty of plantation slavery.”⁹ Aside from the unknown millions who perished in the middle passage, there was the brutality of the ‘seasoning’ or breaking in process, which one ex-overseer, J.B. Moreton, estimated killed thirty thousand slaves annually in Jamaica alone.¹⁰

Frederick Douglass was able to make an important distinction in his own thinking between religion and Christ. Douglass states:

I love the pure, peaceable and impartial Christianity of Christ; I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity.¹¹

Not many slaves could see the distinction that Douglass made and instead associated Christianity with their master’s oppression.

Another major reason for the slow spread of Christianity among slaves was the commonly held belief in the 18th century that a Christian could not be held as a slave.¹² However this view may have hindered evangelization of the slaves, it did

⁹ Thompson, *African Diaspora*, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹¹ Frederick Douglass, ‘Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave,’ *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Penguin Group, 1987 reprint of 1845 edition), 326.

not keep the Quakers and Moravians from making a concerted effort to evangelize them. They made the crucial decision to refuse to hold slaves themselves and to seek to purchase slaves and then set them free. This quote by Edward Freeman, African American historian, states:

Moravians established missions exclusively for Negroes as early as 1738....They accepted the men of color on a basis of religious equality and denounced the nakedness of the religion of the other colonists at the same time....George Fox [founder of the Quaker religion], was advocating the instruction of Negroes in 1672 and in 1679 he boldly entreated his co-workers to instruct and teach the Indians and Negroes how 'Christ by the Grace of God had tasted death for every man.'¹³

Unlike the Quakers and Moravians, many of the other USA denominations had to first reconcile American slavery with their religious beliefs before they would allow the gospel to be preached among their slaves. Otherwise they feared that by allowing the gospel to be preached they might lose their property. It is not surprising that most of the early efforts to evangelize the slave population in America saw little results.

However, nothing drew slaves or anyone else in America towards Christianity in greater numbers than the two Great Awakenings that occurred in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. These Awakenings not only impacted the slaves on the continent, but they particularly multiplied the memberships of the USA Baptist and Methodist denominations. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* states of these two Awakenings:

Beginnings of the movement may be traced among the Dutch Reformed Churches of New Jersey c.1726; it spread to the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the following decade and reached its zenith in New England in the early 1740s. It was closely associated with the preaching of

¹² Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptists and The Foreign Mission Board* (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1953), 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11,13.

Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, though both preachers discouraged the excessive emotionalism which marked the revival. Stress was laid on the visible evidences of conversion and those who did not manifest such tokens of inward grace were openly denounced as unregenerate....A similar revival at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th cent. is sometimes know as the 'Second Great Awakening'. This began among the Congregational Churches of New England, but came to affect the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, and spread throughout the USA.¹⁴

The religious experience of revival meetings were well suited to the needs of the slave's existence in America. The gospel as communicated through these revival meetings provided African Americans hope in the midst of the oppression of slavery. The awakenings caused great growth in many denominations of that time, but particularly those denominations whose systems of worship were more open to the emotional expressions often characteristic of these awakenings. It is little wonder that the populations of Baptist and Methodist churches in America swelled with slaves as a result of these movements whereas the more austere Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians did not attract the same numbers. Later in the 19th century freed slaves founded independent Baptist and Methodist churches and denominations. The oppression of slavery made being free to worship God all the more important. The spread of Christianity among the slave population in the USA was to effect the way in which those same slaves approached their fellow Africans with the gospel message. They saw the freedom that the gospel brought as not only spiritual, but physical as well.

Former slaves often saw education, once legally denied them, as a key to exercising the freedom that the gospel brought them as well as enabling them to read

¹⁴ F.L.Cross and E.A.Livingstone, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 702.

the Bible for themselves. It began with learning to read and write from the Bible or whatever other book they could use. From there, more formal education was sought through freedmen schools set up following the Civil War.

George Liele, the First African American Missionary

It has been stated by many authors that New Englander, William Carey, missionary to India, was the father of modern missions. Historian of American Baptists, Robert Torbet, says of Carey:

At the age of seventeen he had become a Christian. But with a lost world weighing upon his heart and a conviction that world missions should be the concern of every Christian, he was to become the pioneer of the English-speaking Protestant foreign mission movement. His program was simple and straightforward; pray, plan, pay.¹⁵

According to Baker Cauthen, Southern Baptist historian, “Carey’s embarkation to the East [in 1792] not only marked the beginning of missionary concern on the part of Baptists, but by the consensus of historians of every denomination, the beginning of the modern missionary movement.”¹⁶ Though Carey’s impact on missions was significant, nine years before his departure for India, a former slave, George Liele, or Lisle as some records state, went from America to Jamaica to preach the same gospel

¹⁵ Robert G. Torbet, *Venture of Faith: The Story of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1955), 1. Carey left the USA a Congregationalist and arrived in India a Baptist after long hours of study during the voyage.

¹⁶ Baker J. Cauthen, *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 7. Cauthen states of Carey, ‘...in 1792 a Baptist cobbler named William Carey, securing the financial support and prayers of fellow Baptists in England, journeyed to far-off India to ‘preach the gospel to the heathen.’’ p. 7.

that William Carey took to India. Although Carey might be considered the forerunner of Baptist missions from the USA, according to Shepperson and Price, in *Independent African*, Liele began the African American mission movement:

The effective starting-point, however, may be found in George Lisle, a former Virginia slave who went to Jamaica in 1783 as a Baptist missionary and set up the first Negro dissenting chapel there. From that time Baptists, and especially Negro Baptists, were linked with all emancipatory movements amongst the slaves in Jamaica and elsewhere.¹⁷

Jamaican historian, Clement Gayle, confirms that Baptists were key to the struggle for independence in Jamaica. He states, “One only has to note that of Jamaica’s six national heroes, three are Baptists.”¹⁸

When Liele’s background as a former slave is viewed through all that he accomplished during his life, the ‘divine calling’ that he claimed as his motivation for mission can be more clearly understood. Liele was born a slave around 1750 in Virginia. His master, Henry Sharpe, later took him to Burke County, Georgia. Sharpe, a Baptist deacon, freed Liele to enable him to more fully preach the gospel. When the British were preparing to evacuate Savannah at the close of the Revolutionary War, Sharpe’s children (Sharpe having died during the war) sought to re-enslave Liele, possibly because they wanted money or maybe to punish him for taking the side of the British in the war. Liele was helped to escape re-enslavement by a British officer, Colonel Kirkland, and in turn Liele became his indentured

¹⁷ George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Press, 1958), 423. According to the *Encyclopedia of African American Religions*, ed. Larry G. Murphy (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 454, ‘John Rowe, the first British missionary to Jamaica from the Baptist Missionary Society, did not arrive until February 23, 1814.’

¹⁸ Clement Gayle, *George Liele: Pioneer Missionary to Jamaica* (Kingston: Jamaica Baptist Union, 1982), viii.

servant. Liele landed in Kingston Jamaica in 1783 where he worked for the Governor of Jamaica, General Campbell. Due to his hard work, he was able to pay off his debt the following year. “With four men who had immigrated from the American colonies, he founded the first Negro Baptist Church on the island.”¹⁹ Liele was imprisoned once with others and accused of preaching ‘sedition,’ which was a capital offense at that time. They were tried, but only one of them was found guilty and hanged. Liele died in Jamaica in 1820 leaving behind numerous churches with solid leadership.²⁰ It was said of the legacy of Liele’s ministry:

In 1842 more than fifty missionaries were sent out from Jamaica to work in Africa. In addition to his being the first Baptist preacher of the new era to go out and do missionary work in foreign parts, he was the first ordained Negro Baptist preacher in America, apparently; the first Negro missionary of record; and the first of his race to send missionaries back to the land of his origin.²¹

Shepperson and Price state that independent churches like the one founded by Liele and his followers provided “fresh spirit and new centres for Negro revolt in the

¹⁹ Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptists and The Foreign Mission Board* (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1953), 42. Clement Gayle, historian of Liele, writes in his biography *George Liele*, p. 8, ‘Many slaves including Liele, fought on the side of the British during the revolutionary War. Possibly they thought that the British would win the war and grant them freedom afterwards. Or maybe they just took the British at their word that whatever the outcome, slaves who deserted their masters would be given freedom at the end of the war.’

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²¹ *Ibid.* More than likely these fifty missionaries went to Sierra Leone because it was a British colony and received large numbers of slaves rescued from slave ships by a British Squadron which patrolled for slave vessels off the coast of West Africa. A large number of former slaves, who assisted the British during the Revolutionary War in America, went to Halifax, British Columbia (Africville) at the end of the war. Freeman states of one of these former slaves, David George, who was born in 1742, ‘George attended Silver Bluff Church, Savannah and left the country with the British, arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1782. He preached to several congregations in Canada, but in 1792 he went to Sierra Leone and founded a colony, organizing the first Baptist Church there.’ p.43,44

British West Indies.”²² It was no accident that as Liele led his congregations in independent worship that this also led to a desire for freedom in every aspect of life.

Lott Carey and Colin Teague: missionaries to Liberia

Another pioneer in African American missions was Lott Carey.²³ Carey was born a slave on the plantation of William A. Christian of Charles City County, Virginia about 1780.²⁴ Carey was the only child of his parents, and he was raised in a family of devout Christians. While his parents worked in the fields, his godly grandmother taught him the family’s religious and African heritage. In 1804, at the age of 24, Carey moved to Richmond, Virginia and was hired out by Christian, his master, to work as a laborer in the Shockhoe tobacco warehouse.

By 1800 an estimated 25 percent of all Methodists and Baptists in America were African Americans, most of whom worshipped in the same congregations as their masters. Carey attended the First Baptist Church of Richmond and one day in 1807, he heard a message on the gospel according to John chapter three. He decided to become a Christian and longed to learn to read the Bible for himself. He purchased a Bible and proceeded to learn to read from John chapter three. As was often the case with slaves of this period, the Bible was Carey’s primary textbook for

²² Shepperson, *Independent African*, 107.

²³ Lott Carey is not related to William Carey mentioned earlier in this chapter.

²⁴ Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1994), 13-14.

learning. Carey enrolled in a night school taught by a white member of the First Baptist Church of Richmond, William Crane, in which elementary subjects like reading, writing, arithmetic and Bible were taught. His education led to a better job in the tobacco warehouse and as a result he was able to purchase his own freedom and that of his two children in 1813 for \$850 (Carey's first wife had died earlier). Carey was licensed to preach by the First Baptist Church of Richmond.²⁵

William Crane was interested in African missions and encouraged his students to be involved in missions also. Carey imbibed Crane's views on missions and took them to the First African Baptist Church of Richmond where he preached. This resulted in the founding of the Richmond African Missionary Society. Due to several slave uprisings in the early 1800s, Crane had to be elected as president and corresponding secretary of the society.²⁶ However, Carey volunteered as the Society's first missionary. When his employers heard that he was planning on going to Liberia they offered to increase his salary to \$1000 per annum if he would remain in the USA. However, Carey refused this offer and with his family, Colin Teague and his family and Joseph Langford, set sail on 23 January 1821 from Norfolk, Virginia and arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone in early March of the same year en route to Liberia. This group formed their own church before departing with Carey and Teague as the ministers and were the first African American emigrant-

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The most serious slave revolt of that time was known as Gabriel's plot which occurred in Richmond, Virginia in 1800. It was an unsuccessful attempt to capture the Richmond arsenal and begin a general uprising among the slaves. The successful slave revolt in Haiti in 1804 probably added to the fear USA slave owners had toward their slaves. Denmark Vessey of Charleston, South Carolina, was betrayed before his plot could be carried out but this occurred in 1822 a year after Carey left for Liberia. See Michael Mullins, *Africa in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 226-228.

missionaries to Africa. Carey is remembered for his zeal for Christian missions and his skill as a leader. He fulfilled his dream to return to Africa with the gospel message and paved the way for other missionaries to Liberia and to other parts of Africa. Carey and eight others died in Monrovia on 10 November 1829 from an accidental explosion of gunpowder.²⁷

Key African American Denominations

During the early 18th century in America the vast majority of Christians, both slave and free, worshipped together in the same church buildings.²⁸ However, the worship was not a picture of harmony because the slaves were often required to sit in galleries or special sections. This treatment resulted in the founding of independent churches by African Americans the first being a Baptist Church founded at Silver Bluff, South Carolina by a Mr. Palmer sometime between 1773-1775.²⁹

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is the oldest major African American denomination.³⁰ It was founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, for

²⁷ Fitts, *Lott Carey*, 45.

²⁸ William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Charlotte: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Publishing House, 1974), 21. 'As we read the history of these turbulent and struggling days, we see that all the black churches were born in white congregations, East and West, North and South.' Walls goes on to say, 'There were spots of Negro membership in white churches, but the fashion of the age was to segregate them. As they grew larger, they became more and more dissatisfied with this segregation.' p. 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24. Lawrence Jones, African American historian, states in a letter to the author, dated 22 January 1998, 'By 1800 only about 4% of slaves were formally enrolled as Christians. This grew to 12% by 1860 and was only 33% by 1900. It is interesting that these same percentages apply to whites as well....Many slaves rejected the faith particularly because of the persons who were proclaiming it.'

the same reason that most African American churches were founded at that time, in protest of the unequal treatment they received in existing white denominations in America.³¹

When Allen and his brother first accepted Christ they set three goals for themselves, to work harder for their slavemaster, to work hard to bring about their slavemaster's conversion to Christianity, and to purchase their own freedom. African American historian Carol George states of this plan, "It seemed like an ambitious program, but within a rather surprisingly short space of time they were able to accomplish all three objectives."³² Being free, Allen continued his ministry as a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC).

In 1816, the same year the American Colonization Society was founded by Robert Finley, Allen and others formed the AME Church.³³ A few years after its founding the AME Church sent out its first emigrant-missionary, Daniel Coker, to Liberia in West Africa in 1820. Coker had come from a successful church planting ministry in Baltimore and had actually been elected the first bishop of the AME

³⁰ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 48. Lincoln states, '...the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (UAME) is actually the oldest of all the black Methodist denominations....it was founded by Peter Spencer in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1813.'

³¹ St Clair Drake, 'The American Negro's Relation to Africa', in *Africa Today*, December 1967, 13. This need for independence that founded the AME Church in America also appealed to Africans in the AME Church in Zambia. Walton R. Johnson quotes a Zambian members of the AME Church as saying, 'I resolved that with discrimination so wide, perhaps I can tolerate it in daily life, but I cannot take it, when worshipping God I must be free. How can I worship when I know that the preacher could be the one to tell me to go to the side window to be served.' *Worship and Freedom* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1977), 60.

³² Carol V.R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 27.

³³ The American Colonization Society was founded to repatriate former slaves to Africa. Its impact on the African American community will be discussed later in this chapter.

Church. He declined this election in deference to Allen and a few years later proceeded to emigrate to Africa as a missionary. Traveling under the auspices of the Maryland Colonization Society and accompanied by a small group of African Americans, Coker first landed in Liberia, and finally settled in Sierra Leone. While on the ship from America, Coker and others formed an AME church. Upon arriving in Sierra Leone, he began a number of churches and educational institutions. His primary goal was settlement in Africa, but his work as a church planter made it clear that he was also committed to AME missions.³⁴

The AME Church also sent Scipio Bean to Haiti in 1827 and continued expanding South to Mexico and West to Native Americans in the Southwestern USA. This latter mission was led by pioneer missionary William Paul Quinn.³⁵ As AME historian, George Singleton, states:

Quinn was from Calcutta, India, of Negro and Hindu parentage. His father was a wealthy mahogany dealer. Quinn's religious life was induced by a woman missionary, a Quaker, who came from England to India. His father banished and disowned him for having advocated his religious views; so he came to America via Gibraltar, and Sheffield, England....In 1836 he was commissioned by Morris Brown to go west and 'build up the Church.'³⁶

One of the most well known bishops of the AME church was Henry M. Turner.³⁷

His title of 'Apostle of Missions' was earned because of his frequent travels to Africa

³⁴ Singleton, *Romance of African Methodism*, 68. See also, *The Journal of Daniel Coker* (1820 reprinted 1983) by Daniel Coker and the article on Coker in Gerald Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Simon and Schuster, 1997).

³⁵ Larry G. Murphy, J. Gordon Melton, Gary L. Ward, eds., *Encyclopedia of African American Religions* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 8.

³⁶ Singleton, *Romance of African Methodism*, 71. Quinn planted the first AME churches in Louisville and St Louis. He served as Bishop from 1844 to 1873, and as Senior Bishop from 1848, or twenty-five years.

and his strong views on the repatriation of African Americans to Africa. Although his emigration plans never materialized in the way that he had hoped, he did succeed in bringing South Africa into the AME Church.³⁸ Sylvia Jacobs states of Turner's involvement in the AME expansion in South Africa:

On November 5, 1893, Magena Maake Mokone formed his own church, the Ethiopian Church. In 1895 the Ethiopian Church of South Africa began negotiations for affiliation with the American-based AME Church....On June 19, 1896, the Ethiopian Church of South Africa became the Fourteenth Episcopal District of the AME Church, with James Mata Dwane as general superintendent of that district. Bishop Turner visited the recently constituted Fourteenth District in 1898 and ordained more than fifty AME ministers.³⁹

Mokone was called 'Father Mokone' because of his role in helping to bringing the AME church to South Africa. AME historian, L.L. Berry, wrote of the connection between the AME church and South Africa:

In the early nineties [1890s] a group of young African singers came to the United States for a concert tour. After a short period of time their venture failed and they were left without financial resources for their general expenses. They were directed to a young African Methodist Episcopal minister in Ohio, the Rev. R.C. Ransom, (now Bishop Ransom). He advised the young people to go to college and through Bishop Arnett arranged for them to enter Wilberforce College in Ohio. Those who availed themselves of the opportunity afforded them were Charlotte Manye, Marshall Maxeke, Henry C. Msiginye, Charles Dube, James Yapi Tantsi and Adelaide Tantsi.

One of the group, Miss Manye, wrote to her sister in Tranvaal about the wonderful opportunity for education offered by the A.M.E. Church. The letter was read by Rev. M.M. Mokone (father of the present Superintendent in

³⁷ Murphy, *Encyclopedia of African American*, 769. 'Turner's maternal grandfather had been manumitted because he was the son of an African king, and South Carolina upheld an English law forbidding enslavement of royalty.'

³⁸ Sylvia N. Jacobs, 'African Missions and the African American Christian Church,' *Encyclopedia of African American Religions*, ed. Larry G. Murphy (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 13. See also Carol A. Page, 'Black American in White South Africa,' University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1978.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Rhodesia) and others....In 1896 they sent representatives to the United States to request the A.M.E. Church to consider instituting work in South Africa.⁴⁰

Shortly after this union, Dwane and his group seceded from the AME Church due to the failure of that Church to found a training school in the Cape and the feeling that the AME Church undermined the independent spirit of the church. Dwane renamed his church the Order of Ethiopia and in 1900 joined with the Anglican Church.⁴¹

The AME Church in West and South Africa continued to spread East and North during this period and helped numerous Africans go to the USA for education in AME schools.⁴²

As the AME church was being founded in Philadelphia another African American denomination was beginning in the Methodist Churches of New York City for similar reasons:

The desire for non-discriminating access to the Communion table and to itinerant ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church led Black New Yorkers in the John Street Methodist Church to seek a separate arena of church life. Led by James Varick, in 1796 they requested and were granted permission by Bishop Frances Asbury to conduct services of worship among themselves. Then, in June 1821, representatives from Zion, Asbury, and other churches in New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania met in New York, under the leadership of James Varick, to form an independent Black Methodist body.⁴³

⁴⁰ L.L. Berry, *A Century of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1940* (New York: The Missionary Department of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1942), 158.

⁴¹ Jacobs, 'African Missions,' 13. Dwane's being appointed as general superintendent rather than bishop by the AME Church may have also had something to do with his decision to leave that church.

⁴² H. Kamuzu Banda, former president of Malawi, joined the AME church in 1922 and was sponsored to New York in 1925 by AME Bishop W.T. Vernon. See R.I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 187. See also Walton R. Johnson, 'The History of the A.M.E. Church in Zambia', *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, vol. 2, Fall 1974, 63. Johnson states of the AME Church in Zambia, 'In a sense membership in the A.M.E. Church represented an assertion of African pride in circumstances where it was otherwise suppressed. The A.M.E. Church also profited from the fact that it was clearly and genuinely sympathetic to African interests.'

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church had a strong commitment to education and founded numerous schools throughout the United States. Missions to Africa were also a focus of the AMEZ Church. “In 1876 the AMEZ Church began its foreign missionary activities in Liberia. In that year Andrew Cartwright of North Carolina arrived at Brewerville, [Liberia]... He organized the first AMEZ Churches on the African continent in Brewerville on February 7, 1878, and in Clan Ashland in November 1878.”⁴⁴

One of the greatest missionaries of the AMEZ was Bishop John Bryan Small, “born and educated in Barbados. He joined the British army as a clerk and was stationed in the West African country of the Gold Coast (presently Ghana) for three years,...He resigned from the army because of British policies toward the Asante kingdom.”⁴⁵ Small immigrated to the USA in 1871 and became a pastor of an AMEZ church. AMEZ historian, Walton Walls, states about Small:

His most outstanding contribution to AMEZ mission work in Africa was his effort to train indigenous African church leadership. He discouraged the church from sending more Black American missionaries to Africa and concentrated upon sending young Africans to be trained as missionaries at the AMEZ church’s Livingstone College [Salisbury, North Carolina]. Between 1879 and 1900, Small had enrolled at least four students from the Gold Coast at Livingstone College. The most notable was James E.K. Aggrey who was destined to become famous in the twentieth century as an educator and African nationalist.⁴⁶

⁴³ Murphy, *Encyclopedia of African American*, 8,9. This church began with the name Zion Church, but the denominational name in 1821 was the same name as the AME Church in Philadelphia. However, in 1848 the General Conference voted to add ‘Zion’ to its name in honor of the first congregation and to distinguish the denomination from the AME Church founded in Philadelphia. p.9

⁴⁴ Jacobs, ‘African Missions,’ 13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* One of Livingstone College’s objectives was to train missionaries for Africa. pp. 13,14

Aggrey certainly became a well known educator, but his stand on African nationalism at that time could at best be described as proto-nationalism. AMEZ missions focused on founding educational institutions in Africa, like the Aggrey Memorial AME Zion Secondary School at Brafo Yaw, near Cape Coast, Ghana, as well as other institutions in the West Indies and Guyana, South America.⁴⁷

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, today known as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), was organized in Jackson, Tennessee on December 15, 1870. At its inception the church was made up of ex-slaves who had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South (MECS). It attempted to do mission work in the Congo in conjunction with the MECS, but finally decided to let the MECS open the station on its own.

Helping to provide education for African American Youth has been essential to its [CME] missional activity, with some 22 educational institutions under its auspices at one time or another during its history, the most notable being Paine College, Augusta, Georgia; Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee; Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama, and Texas College, Tyler, Texas.⁴⁸

The focus of the CME mission effort was more toward founding educational institutions in America, however, many Africans were also educated in these institutions.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter,⁴⁹ the first African American Baptist church was founded at Silver Bluff, South Carolina between 1773 and 1775. Baptist

⁴⁷ Walls, *African Methodist Episcopal Zion*, 379. 'In 1930, the A.M.E. Zion Church had 23 day schools in the Gold Coast Colony (Ghana), with an enrolment of 2,270 boys and girls....the Aggrey Memorial College of Cape Coast, [was] organized by Rev. A.W.E. Appiah.' p. 385. According to the 34th quadrennial session of the AMEZ held in 1958.

⁴⁸ Murphy, *Encyclopedia of African American*, 159.

⁴⁹ See page 22 above.

churches grew throughout both Great Awakenings in America but did not form themselves into denominations as quickly as the AME churches. Preferring congregational church polity, the Baptist churches often struggled to get funding for denominational projects. However, the missions movement was a unifying influence on African American Baptists as a denomination. It was missions in general and missions to Africa specifically that did what nothing else could do, get Baptist churches to give money. As Baptist historian, Edward Freeman writes:

The reader will find much of the early history of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention and the Convention proper identical. It must be clearly understood that the idea of foreign missions gave rise to the Convention and that the Foreign Mission Board is the oldest organization of the Convention. It antedates the Convention by fifteen years.⁵⁰

Other African American Baptist historians, Owen Pelt and Ralph Smith, agree with Freeman's view. They state, "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the wish to do missionary work in Africa created the National Baptist Convention...."⁵¹

The National Baptist Convention is the largest of the African American Baptist denominations. Starting from 1840 there were a number of attempts by African American Baptists to organize their mission efforts. However it was in 1880 that the first major effort to organize succeeded.

W.W. Colley was an African American missionary with the Southern Baptist Convention from 1874-1879.⁵² Southern Baptist historian, Baker Cauthen, stated of

⁵⁰ Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptist and The Foreign Mission Board* (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1953), 2.

⁵¹ Owen D. Pelt and Ralph Lee Smith, *The Story of The National Baptists* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960), 149.

Colley's role in the mission, "...in late 1874 W.J. David of Mississippi was appointed, and W.W. Colley, a Negro minister of Virginia, was set apart as his helper. They sailed together in January, 1875."⁵³ It should be noted that African American missionaries who served under white mission boards often served as helpers or even servants of the white missionaries. Seldom did these mission boards consider Africans or African Americans as capable of working independently of or on an equal basis with whites. This attitude toward African and African American missionaries contributed to the independent church movements in both Africa and America and encouraged independent missionary movements as well. According to Southern Baptist, Cauthen:

In 1879 W.W. Colley returned to the United States, resigned as a missionary of the Foreign Mission Board, and led Negro Baptists to form their own national organization. He became the first secretary of the new board, and in 1883 led a group of missionaries to Liberia, which became a special field for Negro Baptists of America."⁵⁴

Cauthen does not mention the reason for Colley's departure from the Southern Baptists. The reason had to do with a disagreement in reference to the treatment of indigenous people on the African mission field.⁵⁵

⁵² William J. Harvey III, *Sacrifice and Dedication in a Century of Missions, 1880-1980* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., 1979), 37. Harvey currently serves as corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board.

⁵³ Baker J. Cauthen, *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 143.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵⁵ Freeman, *Epoch Negro Baptist*, 69. Freeman goes on to state, 'A desperate appeal, coupled with a disagreement between the colored and white missionaries with reference to the treatment of natives on the African mission fields, produced the atmosphere which called into being the Foreign Mission Convention.'

Freeman states about the founding of the National Baptist Convention

Foreign Mission Board (NBCFMB):

In 1880 there was an attempt to unite the work of all these groups for the cause of foreign missions. This body, which was organized in 1880, at Montgomery, Alabama, was known as the Foreign Mission Convention. Then in 1886, at St. Louis, Missouri, this body united with another national group to form the Foreign Mission and National Baptist Convention. Still all of the national groups were not united, and in 1895, at Atlanta, Georgia, all three national groups, the Foreign Mission Convention, the National Education Convention, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated, were merged.⁵⁶

It is instructive to note that according to the founding articles of this denomination, Article II states the overall purpose as, “The object of this convention shall be to do mission work in the United States of America, in Africa, and elsewhere and to foster the cause of education.”⁵⁷ This Baptist denomination not only sent missionaries to Africa but it brought Africans to the USA for education. One of the better known Africans affiliated with this denomination was Malawian, John Chilembwe, who attended Virginia Baptist Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia in the late 1890s. By 1921 the Foreign Mission Board had brought to the USA more than two hundred students from Africa and other lands.⁵⁸

The Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention (LCC) was organized as a breakaway from the NBCFMB in 1897 at the Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington, D.C. It was founded in protest of some of the policies of the NBCFMB. One

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2,3. The final name agreed on was the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132. It is not known how many of these 200 African students actually became missionaries or ministers in Africa.

conflicting policy was their differing views on co-operation with white mission boards. The LCC believed that missions could be done in co-operation with white Baptists and this was part of their disagreement with the NBCFMB.⁵⁹ The other major issue on which they differed was the percentage of money used for administration versus actual missionary work overseas. This statement on the beginning of the Lott Carey Convention explains this difference:

The constitution was in part a protest against the practice of the National Baptists which, at that time, were using approximately 75 percent of these funds on operating expenses. Consequently, the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention's constitution required that no more than 25 percent of the total income could be used for operating expenses while the remaining 75 percent must be sent to the foreign fields.⁶⁰

There were numerous smaller denominations and churches in the African American community which sent missionaries to Africa. There were also some missionaries who went on their own, like Maria Fearing who was born a slave in Gainsville, Alabama in 1838. She started school at the age of 33, and completed the 9th grade. At the age of 56 and weighing scarcely 90 lbs., Fearing volunteered for mission service in Africa. Considered too old to be a missionary, her application to the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) for placement in the Congo was rejected. Undaunted by this rejection, Fearing sold her home and used her life savings along with some local contributions to become a 'self-sustaining missionary' in Africa in 1894. Two years later she was appointed a missionary with the PCUS in the Congo

⁵⁹ Murphy, *Encyclopedia of African American*, 459. Murphy states of this controversy, 'It was the result of a controversy within the National Baptist Convention regarding the primacy of foreign mission and cooperation with White Baptists.'

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

where she served for 21 years until 1915.⁶¹ This shows the commitment of Fearing to obey her 'calling' whatever the cost. Neither her race, age, gender nor lack of financial support could keep her from becoming a missionary. The work of missions by African Americans, more often than not, required this kind of tenacity to overcome the many difficulties that they faced.

Historian Gayraud Wilmore states in his article, "Black Americans in Missions: Setting the Record Straight," "What is most incredible is that these impoverished and uneducated Black preachers, many with a price still on their heads, had the audacity to think that they could do for Blacks overseas what they could scarcely do for themselves at home."⁶² However incredible the missionary impulse might seem, it could be said that with the freedom of independent worship came a sense of responsibility and even 'calling from God' to share the gospel with others. Coupled with this was the desire for a cultural reconnection with Africa. Answering this calling was in some ways an expression of appreciation for freedom from slavery and a response to the desire for reconnection with Africa that many felt. Hamstrung by slavery, lack of funds, and organizational difficulties, it is a tribute to these early African American denominations that they survived at all. The fact that they were able to send missionaries to Africa is even more amazing.

⁶¹ Document on Black Presbyterian Missionaries 1889-1989 held in the audio-visual archive school library, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

⁶² Gayraud S. Wilmore, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 10, January 1986, 101. Wilmore goes on to state of the African American mission focus, 'Their missionaries, for the most part, related to the Africans as less fortunate cousins, if not as blood brothers and sisters. They did not ridicule the Africans in their letters to sending agencies back home, segregate them in their mission compound, or treat them as 'ignorant native boys' and rank inferiors as they attempted to civilize them through an acculturated gospel.'

Southern Baptists, Southern Presbyterians and African American Missionaries

White denominations in the USA played a significant role in the sending of African American missionaries to Africa. Their general attitude towards sending them to Africa is expressed in this quote by historian Robert Weisbord:

After the Civil War one of the principal forces shaping the attitudes of Negroes towards Africa and vice versa was the missionary tradition. White missionary societies felt that the 'natives' would be more receptive to Christianity when it was preached by fellow blacks. The societies also believed, quite mistakenly, that American Negro missionaries would be more tolerant of the African climate and more resistant to African disease than whites.⁶³

Walter Williams, African American historian, states that geography also had something to do with the placement of African American missionaries by white denominations:

Afro-American missionaries were sent by white churches only to tropical areas of western and central Africa, where disease took a greater toll on white missionaries. Consequently, there were no white-sponsored black churchmen in healthy areas like the Kenya Highlands or South Africa. This distinction points out the self-serving nature of white church use of Afro-Americans: blacks were not deemed to be of worth unless health factors prevented the use of white clergy.⁶⁴

Williams states that during the period of his research, 1877-1900, there were no African American missionaries sent to healthy areas of Africa. However, after 1900 a number of African American missionaries were sent to healthy areas of Kenya by the YMCA. Although the YMCA was not then classified as a religious

⁶³ Robert G. Weisbord, 'Africa, Africans and the Afro-American: Images and Identities in Transition', *Race*, vol. 10 no. 3, 1969, 307.

⁶⁴ Walter L. Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 9.

denomination, the YMCA secretaries were in fact African American missionaries to East Africa.

The American Baptist Foreign Mission Board (ABFMB) was founded as a result of the First Great Awakening and was an outlet for churches to do missions both at home and abroad. Some churches had tripled in membership within a five year period and many felt that this outpouring partially enabled them to focus on world missions.⁶⁵ Their first attempt at missions in Africa was in Liberia. However, due to health reasons, the ABFMB chose to pull out of this mission and open a new one in the Congo.⁶⁶

In the Congo, the ABFMB worked with the LCC (African American Baptist) which provided African Americans, Clinton and Eva Boone as missionaries for its station at Mpalabala, Congo. The Boones served in the Congo for five years, from 1901-1906, during which time Eva Boone died from an insect bite. Clinton Boone stated of his own health, "I am glad to say that I remained in Africa five years and was never in bed a single day with fever."⁶⁷ The Boone's work in the Congo was explained in this way by LCC historian Leroy Fitts:

⁶⁵ Robert G. Torbet, *Venture of Faith: The Story of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1955), 2,3. In this 640 page history of the American Baptist missions the only reference to the African American contribution to missions was on page 320 where it states, 'It seems that white Baptists, both north and south, hoped that the Negro Baptists of the United States might assume responsibility for this mission [Liberia]. In time, this proved to be true, for in later years the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, both organized by Negroes in the United States, carried chief responsibility for the American support of the churches in Liberia.' However, considering the date (1955) of its publication this omission is not surprising.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 321. Torbet gives this explanation for the ABFMB's departure from Liberia, 'Faced with the realization that white men were unsuited to the climate of Liberia, the Missionary Union began to consider other parts of Africa in which it might take up work.'

The presence of Dr. and Mrs. Boone in the Congo was the result of a cooperative project between the Lott Carey Convention and the Missionary Union [American Baptist] in Boston. The plan was this: the Missionary Union was to furnish the field and house for the missionaries, and the Lott Carey Convention was to pay the missionaries' salaries. Both groups faithfully supported the plan.⁶⁸

This type of co-operation between African Americans and white mission boards was sometimes a difficult marriage because some mission board's idea of co-operation was not as evenly applied as the word implies.⁶⁹

Ironically, it was the Southern Presbyterians and the Southern Baptists who used African American missionaries the most during the nineteenth century. Both denominations were founded as splits from their Northern counterparts over the issue of slavery. As Southern Baptist historian Baker Cauthen states:

The creation of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845, therefore, was at once a painful separation over a cultural condition [slavery] that would incur the judgement of history and a glad release for a fervent missionary and evangelistic spirit that would chart a remarkable course not only in American life, but throughout the world.⁷⁰

When this split occurred in 1845, it was left to each missionary on the field to decide which board they would work under. Four years later Cauthen states that all the Southern Baptist missionaries in Africa were African Americans. "In its fourth annual report (1849) the new Board lists under its 'African Mission' 13, 'Missionaries,' including 7 ministers and 6 teachers with work at 8 different

⁶⁷ Clinton C. Boone, *Congo As I Saw It* (New York: J.J. Little and Ives Company, 1927), 48. Page 74 of this book describes Eva Boone's final days. Clinton Boone subsequently remarried and after completing medical school returned to Congo for a second term. After this term he went to dental school and returned to Congo for a third term.

⁶⁸ Fitts, *Lott Carey*, 108,109.

⁶⁹ See chapter 5 for a discussion on 'co-operation' at the Le Zoute Conference.

⁷⁰ Cauthen, *History of Southern Baptist*, 3.

localities. All were Negroes from America serving in Liberia, which had become a republic in 1847.”⁷¹ Cauthen goes on to state, “The work in Liberia continued to show encouraging results from the use of Negro ministers and teachers. No white missionaries were sent, but in 1852, Eli Ball, a Virginia pastor, went on a special mission of inspection,...”⁷² The Southern Presbyterians followed a similar policy of sending out African American missionaries to the Congo.

There were two main reasons why white mission boards sent freedmen to Africa. First, it was sometimes seen as a partial atonement for the sin of slavery:

Africa had been an object of American missionary ambitions since theologian Samuel Hopkins and his Newport, Rhode Island, colleague, Ezra Stiles, proposed in 1773 to evangelize that continent by means of Negro ex-slaves....Behind these proposals, early and late, lay a bad conscience about Negro chattel slavery which evangelicals sought to salve by making use of the nefarious institution to carry the Gospel to the homeland of the unfortunate bondsmen.⁷³

Secondly, it was generally believed that African American missionaries were better able to acclimatize themselves to life in tropical Africa. As historian Clifton Phillips states, “...evangelicals believed it impossible to carry Christianity successfully to Africa by other than colored missionaries, whose ancestral heritage and pigmentation made them more acceptable to the native population than Caucasians, and provided adequate protection as well against the ravages of the

⁷¹ Ibid., 138.

⁷² Ibid., 140.

⁷³ Clifton J. Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 206. The ‘making use of the nefarious institution’ probably refers to the idea of Providential Design which implies that slavery could be justified because it resulted in the sending of former slaves back to Africa as missionaries.

tropical climate.”⁷⁴ The fallacy of pigmentation as a kind of inoculation against disease eventually became evident according to Presbyterian historian, Andrew Murray, “After the Civil War, in 1889, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions reported that its experience in Liberia showed, ‘that people of color possess little if any advantage over white persons as to health in Liberia.’”⁷⁵ By the 1900s, medicines were discovered that helped missionaries survive the health difficulties of tropical Africa and the guilt of slavery was apparently satisfied. Therefore, by the 1920s, few African American missionaries were being sent out by white mission boards. It should be noted again that in most cases when African American missionaries served with white mission boards, they served in subordinate roles, as helpers or assistants of white missionaries.⁷⁶ Allowing an African American to have responsibility for a mission station was usually avoided until all white male missionaries were dead or incapacitated.

In 1880 the Foreign Mission Board, an African American organization, was founded, in part, as a protest against the treatment of Africans by Southern Baptist missionaries.⁷⁷ African American missionaries who chose to serve under white mission boards experienced this type of treatment well into the 20th century.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 208.

⁷⁵ Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), 84.

⁷⁶ See Sylvia Jacobs, ‘The Sons and Daughters of Africa: Nancy Jones, Missionary in Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia, 1888-1897,’ in *Sage* vol. 9, no. 2, Summer 1995, 88.

⁷⁷ See page 30 of this chapter for information on W.W. Colley and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The American Colonization Society was influential in the early African American missionary movement. In the early nineteenth century various colonization societies encouraged freed slaves to move to Africa as missionary-emigrants. Historian David Wills states, "But when the American Colonization Society was founded as a sort of unholy alliance of missionaries and Southern slaveholders, Cuffe's friends, the Philadelphia blacks, immediately saw it as a scheme to get rid of free blacks, to make slavery more secure."⁷⁸ Lott Carey was partially supported by one of these colonization societies. As Presbyterian historian Andrew Murray wrote:

Colonization made an appeal to the strong missionary zeal which swept American Protestantism early in the nineteenth century....since color could not be changed, racial integration would be impossible, and it would be better for the Negro to seek his fortunes in Africa, than to endure the unequal contest against racial prejudice in America....Basic to the creed of colonization was its acceptance of the doctrine of Negro inferiority,...The idea that Negroes were inferior was accepted by leaders of American thought from the time of Thomas Jefferson...It [colonization] subtly encouraged a kind of respectable racism under the cloak of benevolence, and was shocked when those it tried to help rejected its efforts for them.⁷⁹

USA President, Abraham Lincoln, disagreed with slavery, but strongly felt that the races should be kept separate. He said in one of his speeches:

I have said that the separation of the races is the only perfect preventative of amalgamation....Such separation, if ever effected at all, must be effected by colonization;...Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and, at the same time, favourable to, or, at least, not against, our interest, to transfer the

⁷⁸ David W. Wills and Richard Newman, eds., *Black Apostles At Home and Abroad* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Company, 1982), 199.

⁷⁹ Murray, *Presbyterians and The Negro*, 78-80.

African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be. The children of Israel, to such numbers as to include four hundred thousand fighting men, went out of Egyptian bondage in a body.⁸⁰

Even in Lincoln's famous Emancipation Proclamation which declared the end of slavery in the USA, he mentions colonization as a part of that freedom. Lincoln states in the Proclamation, "and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the governments existing there, will be continued."⁸¹ If the number of foreign governments that agreed to receive former slaves was any indication of the success of Lincoln's plan then it was a failure.⁸²

Lincoln's one actual attempt to colonize former slaves from Fort Monroe, Virginia to San Domingo, in the Caribbean, met with difficulty as he admits in this letter to Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton:

You are directed to have a transport sent to the colored colony established by the United States at the Island of Vache, on the coast of San Domingo, to bring back to this country such of the colonists there as desire to return....The colonists will be brought to Washington unless otherwise hereafter directed, and be employed and provided for at the camps for colored persons around that city. Those only will be brought from the island who desire to return, and their effects will be brought with them.⁸³

⁸⁰ Paul M. Angle, ed., *Abraham Lincoln's Speeches and Letters, 1832-1865* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1907, 2nd edition 1957), 70. Lincoln being a politician was a man of compromise and was staunchly committed to holding the Union together at any cost. See also Lapsley *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol.8, 173-74.

⁸¹ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *Abraham Lincoln a History*, vol. VI (New York: The Century, 1917), 168.

⁸² This can be assumed by the fact that Lincoln could only get permission from one other country to receive former slaves. San Domingo was his only attempt at colonization and the following quotation describes the failure of this program.

⁸³ Nicolay and Hay, eds., *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. II, 477. The previous quotations by Lincoln tend to support Charles Wesley's assessment of Lincoln in his article, 'Lincoln's Plan for Colonizing the Emancipated Negroes,' *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 4, no.1, January 1919, 20. According to Wesley, Lincoln said in 1865, "'But what shall we do with the Negroes after they are free?' inquired

Lincoln's plan failed, but it did not change his view that whites and freed slaves would be better off separated from each other. However, it did show that it was much easier to talk about the colonization of former slaves than to make it happen. In addition to strong family ties in the USA, freed slaves often felt that after working for generations to build America, they had as much right as anyone to live in that country. Frederick Douglass, African American abolitionist, expressed the view of many freedmen when he wrote in 1850:

We are of the opinion that the free colored people generally mean to live in America, and not in Africa; and to appropriate a large sum for our removal, would merely be a waste of the public money. We do not mean to go to Liberia. Our minds are made up to live here if we can, or die here if we must.

While our brethren are in bondage on these shores; it is idle to think of inducing any considerable number of the free colored people to quit this for a foreign land.

We live here—have lived here—have a right to live here, and mean to live here.⁸⁴

Like Douglass and Cuffe, it did not take most African Americans long to see that the real objective of the colonization societies was not to evangelize Africa, but to get rid of freed slaves whose presence around slaveholding plantations represented a threat to that system.

Lincoln. 'I can hardly believe that South and North can live in peace unless we get rid of the Negroes. Certainly they cannot, if we don't get rid of the Negroes whom we have armed and disciplined and who have fought with us, to the amount, I believe, of some 150,000 men. I believe that it would be better to export them all to some fertile country with a good climate, which they could have to themselves.'" Wesley took this quote from General Benjamin F. Butler's book *Reminiscences*, p. 903.

⁸⁴ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Fred Douglass*, vol. 1, reprinted in *Apropos of Africa*, eds. Adelaide Hill and Martin Kilson (New York: Frank Cass Ltd., 1969), 39. Douglass was strongly opposed to the Colonization Society's plans to ship freed slaves back to Africa. He felt that Southern slave owners were simply trying to get rid of freed slaves who might encourage other slaves to seek freedom also.

It would appear that for the colonization scheme to have worked, force would have been necessary to get the freed slaves to leave in any numbers. Lincoln specifically stipulated that government efforts to colonize persons of African descent were to be voluntary.⁸⁵ Having armed and trained over 150,000 African American soldiers in the Union army, Lincoln was convinced that former slaves could not be forced to leave the USA.⁸⁶

The fear of being forcibly repatriated to Africa was a real concern of freed slaves in the early 19th century. African American historian St Clair Drake summarized the fear that many former slaves felt about forced repatriation to Africa in this way:

By 1812, some of the leaders among the Free Negroes had become frightened by the activities of the 'Colonization Societies' which were trying to encourage Negroes to settle in Africa. They feared forcible deportation and a weakening of the anti-slavery struggle if Negroes identified too closely with Africa as their home. They began to drop the designation 'African' and to refer to themselves as 'Colored' and to organize 'Colored Men's Associations.'⁸⁷

This shift in using the title 'Colored' for 'African' was, in part, a result of the desire of African Americans to firmly root their existence in the North American continent.

⁸⁵ Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship* (Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973), 13. See also *'Dear Master' Letters of a Slave Family*, ed. Randall M. Miller (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 27. Miller states, 'Most eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Southern liberals, including [John] Cocke, Jefferson, and James Madison, advocated the colonization of American blacks as a solution to the race problem in America and indirectly as a way of promoting gradual emancipation. Colonizationists rooted their programs in the conviction that America must be a white man's country.'

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13. See also Wesley, 'Lincoln's Plan,' 16. He states of Lincoln, 'The President came to be of the firm opinion that emigration must be voluntary and without expense to those who went.'

⁸⁷ Drake, 'American Negro,' 13.

They knew there were those in America who favored the forced expulsion of former slaves. In the 1830s many southern states passed laws to achieve this result.

“Virginia law required any newly freed slave to leave the state within a year of liberation or face re-enslavement. Other states had passed similar repressive laws, most often in the wake of Nat Turner’s insurrection of 1831.”⁸⁸

Britain had actually forcibly removed Africans from its mainland on a number of occasions, no doubt making the idea of forced expulsion from America an even greater concern for freed slaves in the USA.⁸⁹ Although Britain’s black population was infinitely smaller than that of America, British attempts at forced repatriation equally failed. Britain, no doubt, shared a similar frustration with the USA that resulted from trying to solve its ‘race problem’ by deporting its black population. Historian Folarin Shyllon states of the British experience:

As a result of the American Revolution, many blacks who had fought on the British side, and who would have been in danger had they remained in America after the successful revolution, were taken to Britain....Soon, however, the committee decided that the best way to relieve the black poor permanently was to deport them and rid Britain of this nuisance. The government readily agreed. But out of the approximately ten thousand black people in Britain, less than four hundred ultimately left Britain to form the settlement of Sierra Leone. Spearheaded by Equiano and Cugoana [educated former slaves], the majority of blacks, in spite of the tremendous pressure brought to bear on them to leave Britain, refused to leave.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Randall M. Miller, *‘Dear Master’ Letter of a Slave Family* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990) 35.

⁸⁹ Folarin Shyllon, ‘Blacks in Britain: A Historical and Analytical Overview,’ in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), 225,226. Shyllon states, ‘For in that year [1596], and again in 1601, it was the ‘pleasure’ of Elizabeth I to command: ‘...that those kinde [blackamoors] of people should be sent forth of the land.’ Again in 1786 and 1787 further attempts were made to rid Britain of her black population, which was mostly male. p. 231. Having had a conflict with Spain, Queen Elizabeth was probably also concerned about the loyalty of the ‘blackamoors’ whose name identified them with Spain.

The freedmen's first desire upon gaining his freedom was to free his wife, children and other relatives, not to leave America for an unknown land. Gaining an education was another priority that many freedmen felt compelled to fulfil.⁹¹ African Americans felt a responsibility to help in Africa's evangelization in addition to, not at the expense of, helping their own people gain freedom in America. For this and other reasons, relatively few African Americans took advantage of the offer colonization societies made to help them emigrate to Africa.

Colonization failed as a solution to either the social or moral ills resulting from American slavery. The reasons for its failure were many, but the main reason was simply that although many African Americans had feelings of kinship with Africa most saw America as their home and they did not want to leave. Therefore, African Americans have been historically unwilling to go to Africa in great numbers with either the colonization societies, the USA government or with religious denominations.

The colonization societies eventually did send a small number of African Americans to Africa, but they never reached their objective of deporting large numbers of former slaves. Historically, efforts to get masses of African Americans to emigrate from the USA generally failed even when they were instituted by African

⁹⁰ Ibid. According to Shyllon, following WWI British, 'Blacks were put in internment camps pending repatriation. By 1921, 627 blacks had been sent out of Britain.' p. 237.

⁹¹ Robert R. Moton (Second President of Tuskegee Institute), *What The Negro Thinks* (London: 1930), 40. Moton wrote, 'Negroes have been avid for education ever since emancipation as well as before. Restrained from it till then by compulsion, the first manifestation of freedom was the clamour of all ages for education. It was everywhere regarded as the white man's talisman in the acquisition of power and wealth and position.' Booker T. Washington states of education in his book *Up From Slavery*, 'Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for an education.' p. 30.

Americans themselves.⁹² Instead, many African Americans chose to migrate within the USA moving from the south to the north and west in search of a better life.

Conclusion

To be sure, all missionaries to Africa in the 19th century suffered from the difficulties of life there. Disease and sickness showed no favorites among those who entered tropical Africa. Many of the experiences of African American missionaries were no different from other missionaries of that period. They suffered for what they believed to be the 'Good News' of the gospel and their 'divine calling' to share it with others. If missionaries of different races had such similar experiences and objectives, why was it so difficult for them to work together on an equal basis? The explanation for the separation that existed between these missionaries cannot ignore the fact of racism as a key cause. Racism has been a major factor in the creation of almost every African American denomination as well as mission board. Even the members of the two denominations, African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, which held the same doctrinal statements, could not worship as equals in the same sanctuary because of racial discrimination. Hardly an African who came into contact with a western missionary for any length of time could avoid becoming aware of a separation between the two. African Americans understood the significance of this separation, having been sensitized to it during

⁹² This includes the Marcus Garvey movement in the 1920s.

their experiences in America. Although they were guilty of some of the same western cultural attitudes of superiority that oppressed them, they knew what it was like to be judged simply by the color of their skin. Whether it was being told to go to the back door, or not being invited to missionary gatherings except as servants, the African American knew what it was like to be discriminated against because of skin color. This experience was shared by many Africans which gave the two a common bond in suffering oppression.

It is clear from history that African Americans did not see a conflict between a positive African heritage and their desire to firmly establish their existence in North America. All efforts to get African Americans to emigrate from the USA in mass failed because they generally felt that they belonged in America and had earned that right after generations of unpaid labor to build that country. Just as millions of European immigrants claimed the USA as their home in the late 1800s, so African Americans felt they had an equal right to make their homes there.

The objective here is not to show how different African American missionaries were in comparison with white missionaries. To set white missionaries up as the standard and then show how African American missionaries differed would not do justice to the contributions of either. One purpose of this research is to correct the eurocentric focus of African missions history which so often focused itself on the contribution of western missionaries to the exclusion of all others. By overlooking the contribution of Africans and African Americans to the evangelization of Africa, historians have implied that their contributions were insignificant. The denominational histories seem to say by their silence on the African and African

Americans contribution to missions that only Euro-American missionaries did the work of evangelization.⁹³ This view, once approved as an accurate history by the West, can no longer be accepted as true history of missions today.

This history of African American missions to Africa reveals the impact it had on the ethnic reconnection of the African American community with Africa. Only one generation removed from slavery, many African Americans considered mission work to be not only a responsibility, but a privilege. Lack of resources was little excuse for not doing what they could towards the redemption of Africa. They felt a duty to be obedient to the command, “Go into all the world and make disciples...” (Matt 28:19). For some of them this meant death, to others grief and suffering, but to all the fulfilment of knowing that they had tried to obey their Master’s call to “go”.

Although African American missionaries were a numerically small part of a much bigger missionary movement in North America, their desire to contribute, was important and meaningful to them as a grateful people. It is a tribute to African American denominations that in spite of all the opposition they faced, they were still able to do something in terms of missions. Just as the oppression of slavery was no excuse to neglect their Christian responsibility toward missions, neither were the blessings of freedom. If anything, the freedom that came after the Civil War, along with reports from people like Livingstone that slavery was still in force in East Africa, increased the impulse of the gospel toward Africa in the African American community.

⁹³ Neither the white nor African American contributions to the evangelization of Africa can exceed the contribution of African themselves. As a result more research is being done by scholars on the African contribution to missions in Africa.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARIES TO EAST AFRICA, 1900-1926 (MAP)



CHAPTER II
RECONNECTION AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARIES TO
EAST AFRICA

The Slave's Lament

It was in sweet Senegal that my foes did me enthrall,
 For the lands of Virginia O;
 Torn from that lovely shore, I must never see it more,
 And alas I am weary, weary O!

All on the charming coast is no bitter snow or frost,
 Like the lands of Virginia O;
 There streams for ever flow, and there flowers for ever blow,
 And alas I am weary, weary O!

The burden I must bear, while the cruel scourge I fear,
 In the lands of Virginia O;
 And I think on friends most dear, with the bitter, bitter tear,
 And alas I am weary, weary O!¹

Robert Burns

A recurring theme throughout this research is the cultural reconnection between African Americans and Africa as part of the motivation behind African American missions.² As it was shown in chapter 1 early African American missionaries were partially motivated to go to Africa by a desire for cultural reconnection with Africa. This chapter will further define the idea of reconnection

¹ Robert Burns, *The Complete Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Samuel Carr, (London: Chancellor Press, 1990, 2nd edition 1994), 424.

² The idea of cultural reconnection is a major theme of this research. The early history of this theme of reconnection was discussed in chapter 1 and will be developed further in the section on mission motivation in chapter 4. The current chapter will introduce the idea of reconnection.

between Africans and African Americans brought about by these missionaries and will introduce the missionaries and discuss their preparation for work in East Africa.

First, reconnection implies that there was some form of connection to begin with. Even the African American experience of slavery in the USA could not completely wipe out the African heritage that the slaves brought with them to America. Although virtually all slaves experienced some destruction of their African heritage, much of it deliberate, some scholars have gone further and argued that slavery destroyed all vestiges of Africa identity. However, with the abolition of the international slave trade in 1807 and American slavery in 1863, came a strengthening of the existing impulse for African Americans to reconnect with their African heritage.³

In addition, Livingstone's reports about the growth of Central African slavery, carried on by Portuguese and Arab traders, strengthened the missionary impulse among African Americans.⁴ It made many feel, having only a few years before been oppressed by slavery themselves, that something had to be done for their distant relatives in Africa.

However, there is a difficulty that the idea of reconnection raises and that is, do the Africans share the desire for reconnection with African Americans? Historian

³ Interview with William Harvey, corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, 8 November 1996. Harvey states that freedom from slavery motivated African Americans to want to help those still in bondage.

⁴ See Introduction footnote 3 where Booker T. Washington states of Livingstone, 'In the accounts of his later travels, we were stirred by the terrible pictures he drew of the slave trade and touched by the profound sympathy which the casual references of his last diary exhibit for these unfortunate black people and their suffering.'



Bengt Sundkler states, “American Negro missionaries were, however, just as much foreigners and strangers in the eyes of the Ethiopians as the White missionaries.”⁵

The Ethiopians, about whom Sundkler was writing, were not the geographic Ethiopians, but a branch of Christianity in Africa that claimed for itself independence from outside sources. Sundkler seeks to strengthen his point by noting, “The same kind of propaganda was directed against the AME [African Methodist Episcopal] as against the ‘White missions’ because it took all moneys collected for the church in Africa to America.”⁶ Even if some felt resentment about having their contributions sent to the USA, it did not change the fact that African American missionaries were not viewed by themselves as complete foreigners in Africa. The key was would the East Africans reciprocate the cultural reconnection that African Americans felt towards them.⁷

Without ignoring the evidence to the contrary, the information in favor of an African ancestral heritage which survived slavery must be considered. Historian Joseph Harris’ description of the East African slave trade in his book, *The African Presence in Asia*, gives numerous examples of slaves who did not forget their African background:

⁵ Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), 42.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In being identified with the West culturally, in dress, speech, and habits, African Americans had to overcome being seen by East Africans as ‘Mzungu Mweusi’ or ‘White Black people’ by their behavior towards the East Africans. This is a result of the perception that African Americans have replaced their Africa culture, language and dress with the language, culture and dress of the West. This name, which is clearly used in a pejorative sense, is also applied to Africans who live in the West and return home having forgotten their African culture.

This harsh experience, together with life as a bonded person in a dominant, alien, and generally hostile society, gradually caused the African to forget most of his native language and to modify his traditional way of life, his religious beliefs, and indeed his psyche. But that experience as decisive as it was in many ways, did not destroy his consciousness of the African heritage.⁸

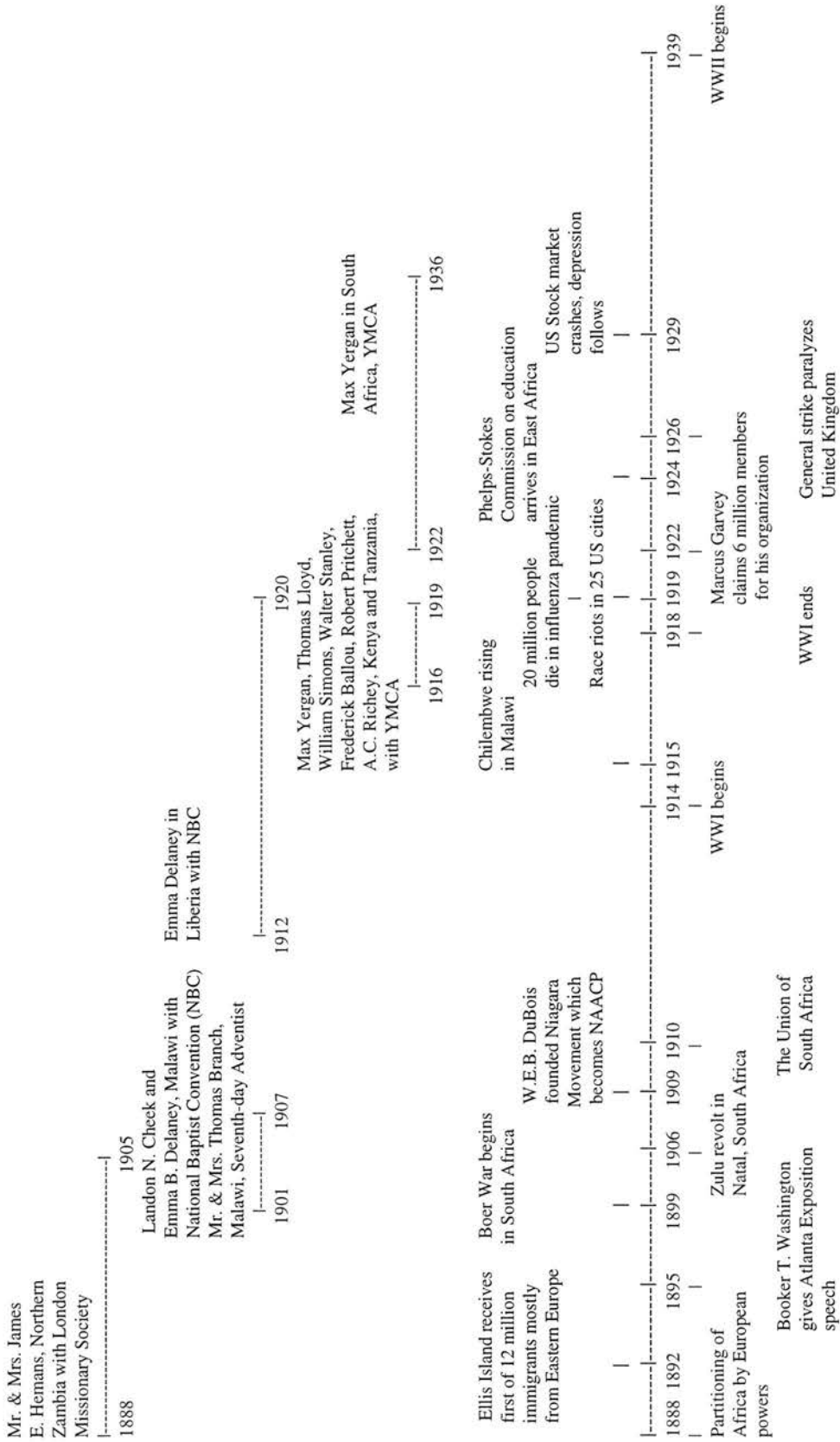
Slavery had many facets and created a culturally complicated web that many are still trying to interpret. This research seeks to build on the assumption that the slave experience could not totally blot out the slave's African ancestry.⁹

This research will now introduce, in chronological order, the missionaries who pioneered the African American work in East Africa. The first to arrive were Mr. & Mrs. James E. Hemans of Porus, Jamaica.¹⁰ James Hemans served in Jamaica as a headmaster and although little is known about his educational training it is clear from his position in the mission and the quality of his correspondence that he was well educated.

⁸ Joseph E. Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971) 120. This book includes statements by repatriated East African slaves recorded by British seaman that support Harris' view that slavery did not wipe out the slave's memory of his African ancestry. They could never forget their African heritage although no effective knowledge of the traditional culture remained as in the case of the Yoruba of Bahia in Brazil who were slaves brought from Nigeria as a cultural group and were able to maintain some of their linguistic and cultural practices. This was no doubt partially due to the fact that Brazilian slavery grew more by the continuous importation of slaves from Africa while American slavery grew more by multiplication of slaves by birth in America.

⁹ James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), viii. Campbell states that the central premise of his book is, '...that African and African American identities are and have always been mutually constituted.'

¹⁰ The Hemans were originally from Jamaica. However, their experience in working with the LMS was representative of the African American experience in East Africa and therefore, they are included in this study. Their 18 year contribution at one of the LMS's most difficult mission stations has barely been mentioned in LMS histories to date.



CHRONOLOGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN EAST AFRICA

In November 1888, the Hemans arrived in the southern Lake Tanganyika region in what is currently Northern Zambia and served with the London Missionary Society (LMS) for 18 years. They were a product of the LMS Jamaica mission and were recruited as missionaries as a test to see if Afro-Caribbeans could survive in the difficult climate of the Lake Tanganyika region. Having lost numerous missionaries to sickness and disease the LMS was looking for a way to keep their stations in that area open with fewer casualties in terms of missionaries. The Hemans hoped that if they could survive then their mission might open the way for more Africans in the Diaspora to follow them. They were in a number of senses pioneer missionaries. In working with a predominately European mission agency, they were helping the LMS define its future policy concerning these missionaries. Going to East Africa in 1888 when the European scramble for Africa was well under way and returning in 1905, when Social Darwinism and scientific racism were generally accepted as facts, they were caught between the “survive at any cost mentality” of the LMS of the 1880s and a new generation of younger inexperienced artisan missionaries of the early 1900s who had imbibed a strong view of their own racial and cultural superiority.¹¹ They worked among the Lungu tribe, moving between the three stations at Kambole, Niamkolo and Fwambe of the LMS in the Lake Tanganyika area. They departed the country in 1905 and returned to Jamaica through England.

¹¹ Social Darwinism and scientific racism are the ideas that the white race had evolved to the highest level of all races. These ideas will be discussed in chapter 4 on missionary motivation.

A group of four missionaries served in Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) in the early 1900s as Baptists and Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. These missionaries are listed in order of their arrival in Nyasaland.

Landon Napoleon Cheek was born on 8 December 1871 in Canton, Mississippi, the son of a former slave who was also a Baptist minister and Pastor of a large congregation in Canton. His mother was a Cherokee Native American. Cheek was the oldest of three sons, all of whom became Baptist ministers. Cheek was active in his church and professed faith in Christ at the age of 17. He attended Natchez Seminary in Mississippi in 1898 which is now Jackson State University. He then transferred to Western College in Macon, Missouri. While in Missouri, he was called as Pastor of Bridgeton Baptist Church, Bridgeton, Missouri which he led while also working as a letter carrier. He pastored this church until his departure for Nyasaland on 3 January 1901 at the age of 29 years. He went out as a Baptist missionary with the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (NBCFMB) and arrived in Nyasaland on 15 April 1901. He served at the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), founded and run by John Chilembwe, in church planting and education until his departure in June 1906. Cheek's wife Rachel was a Yao from Nyasaland, the niece of Chilembwe. While in Nyasaland the Cheeks had three children, Ada, who died in infancy, Ella Mae and Landon, Jr. Cheek took Matthew and Frederick Njilima with his family back to the USA arriving in September 1906. He served numerous Baptist churches as pastor upon his return to the USA and lived to be 94 years old.¹²

Another missionary with the same mission as Cheek was Emma Beard Delaney.¹³ She was born in Fernandina, what is now Fernandina Beach, in the extreme Northeast portion of Florida on 17 January 1871 (the same year as Cheek). Her father, Daniel Sharpe Delaney, was a black ship pilot in that area. Delaney completed Catholic Convent High School in 1889 and graduated with distinction from Spelman Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia in 1894 while simultaneously taking a course in nursing. She went on to complete Spelman's Missionary Training Course in 1896. She served as a missionary with the NBCFMB for almost 20 years. After starting numerous education programs for women and children during her time in Nyasaland she returned to the USA to raise funds for her projects in Africa. Being unable to return to that country, she served with the same mission in Liberia where she founded and developed the Suehn Industrial Mission from 1912-1920. She died of blackwater fever in October 1922 and is buried in Fernandina Beach.¹⁴

Thomas and Henrietta Branch were Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Nyasaland. Thomas Branch was born on 24 December 1856 in Jefferson County, Mississippi. Henrietta Branch was born on 12 March 1858 in Roanoke, Missouri. They were married in 1876. Henrietta Branch accepted the truth as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1892 and Thomas Branch accepted it in 1893.

¹² Margaret Durham, "Rev. Landon N. Cheek and the African American Missionary Movement in Malawi, 1901-1907," p. 7, 15 unpublished document [1991], Durham, the great-granddaughter of Cheek, is writing a forthcoming biography on him.

¹³ Delaney's name is sometimes also spelled DeLaney or DeLany. However, in her correspondence she spelled her name Delaney and her biographer, Willie Mae Ashley, *Far From Home*, used this spelling also. Therefore Delaney will be used throughout this research.

¹⁴ Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach: Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, 1987), 18

After pastoring an SDA church in Pueblo, Colorado for a number of years, they and their three children accepted the call to become SDA missionaries to Nyasaland. They arrived in 1902 and worked with English missionary Joseph Booth for a short time before taking over the station at Malamulo. This station, located in Thyolo district, was the headquarters of the SDA mission in Nyasaland. The Branches' educational background was limited and they depended much on their daughter Mabel to run the educational portion of their mission. The Branches, along with other missionaries who served with them, pioneered and developed the educational, church planting, and industrial training departments of the SDA work in Nyasaland from 1902-1907. They returned to Denver, Colorado in 1907, to develop a SDA church there and eventually moved to Philadelphia to pastor the First African Seventh-day Adventist Church. Henrietta Branch died in 1913 at the age of 55 and Thomas Branch died in 1924 at the age of 68.¹⁵

The next group of African American missionaries to East Africa are important but somewhat different from those discussed previously. They were all YMCA secretaries assigned to British East Africa during WWI. It was the war that caused the British colonial government to open the door for African American missionaries to enter. These secretaries saw this as an opportunity to further their reconnection with Africa. Although the work of the YMCA might be considered today as more social and recreational, the first YMCAs were founded as Bible study and prayer groups. This research identifies these secretaries as missionaries because

¹⁵ Louis B. Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1984), 333.

they were generally committed to sharing the gospel message along with giving physical and educational instruction which were consistent with the general practice of the YMCA in the 1910s.¹⁶ They all had university degrees or were taking breaks from their studies. They were also generally in their early twenties and relatively inexperienced in terms of mission work. However, they were eager to serve in East Africa and felt that if they could do well then other African Americans would be allowed to follow.

The first of these secretaries to enter East Africa was Max Yergan who was born in 1892 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Yergan was the grandson of a slave who had hoped that one of his sons would become a missionary to Africa someday. He attended Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina. In addition to his studies he played football, was a member of the debating team and served as president of the local YMCA chapter his last two years of college. It was in this job that he came to the attention of the leader of the 'Colored' YMCA Jesse Moorland and eventually began working for the YMCA full-time upon graduation.¹⁷ He earned a BA with honors in 1914 and later in 1928, he received a MA (honorary) from Howard University. In 1915, he became a secretary with the YMCA. As a YMCA secretary, he served in East Africa from 1916-1918 during part of WWI. He was evacuated from East Africa due to health difficulties, but recovered sufficiently to be drafted

¹⁶ As this letter from YMCA secretary William Simons indicates, 'The YMCA has become one of the greatest forces for good in India. It is winning its way in many localities and it is winning Christ's way in many lives.' Simons to Henderson, YMCA British East Africa, 8 September 1919, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (hereafter cited as LOC), William H. Simons papers, box 1.

¹⁷ Mary White Ovington, *Portraits in Color* (New York: Viking Press, 1927), 33.

into the US Army as a chaplain. He married Susie Wiseman of Wilmington, North Carolina after returning from WWI and moved his family to South Africa where they lived for 15 years until 1936. Although his time in East Africa was relatively short, he pioneered the work among African American missionaries in Kenya and Tanzania. Yergan died in New York on 11 April 1975 at the age of 82.¹⁸

William Henry Simons, the son of a Baptist minister, was born in 1881 in South Carolina. He was the eldest of 13 children. His parents highly valued both education and missionary work to Africa. His father had even hoped to be a missionary to Africa himself, but for some reason was never able to go.¹⁹ After taking courses at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, Simons eventually earned a BD from Gordon College in Boston, Massachusetts. He served in East Africa as a YMCA secretary during WWI doing much the same work as Max Yergan. First he was assigned to Dar es Salaam and then to the Kenya Highlands with the King's African Rifles. He was the last of the seven YMCA secretaries to leave East Africa and he proceeded to Burma and then India where he worked until 1924. He then returned to the USA to study theology and was ordained as a Baptist minister at Peoples Baptist church in Boston in 1930. Following graduation he went

¹⁸ *New York Times*, 13 April 1975, Yergan obituary.

¹⁹ Minnie Simons Williams, *A Colloquial History of A Black South Carolina Family Named Simons*, (Washington, D.C.: Minnie S. Williams, 1990), 32. 'William Henry, my oldest brother, was named for Grandfather William Henry. He, brother William, was in nature a copy of Papa, who did so want to go to Africa as a missionary. Papa did not make it, but William spent fourteen years of his life in Africa.'

to Ogbomoshu, Nigeria as a missionary with the Southern Baptist Convention. He served there until his death from blackwater fever in 1938 at the age of 57.

Walter Payne Stanley was born in 1892 in Baltimore, Maryland. He earned an AB from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1916. Lincoln University was founded in conjunction with Princeton University and the Presbyterian Church USA as a school for 'Negroes.' Its alumni includes Africans like Kwame Nkrumah, first president of Ghana and Nnamdi Azikiwe, first president of Nigeria. Following his time in East Africa he did further study at Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His application with the YMCA shows he also had addresses in New York City, Louisville and Houston. His time in East Africa was mostly at the Kings African Rifles Depot near Nairobi. However, he also spent time in Dar es Salaam as did most of the other YMCA secretaries in East Africa. He returned to the USA in 1918 and following completion of his theological studies, he was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church.

Thomas Hezekiah Lloyd, born in 1890 in Wilmington, North Carolina. He completed a certificate in shorthand from Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1914 and after returning from East Africa, went on to earn a BA in Commerce from Howard University in 1922. While in school he worked as a farm worker and railway porter-fireman. In East Africa he was adept at learning languages and spent most of his service time at the Railway Training Centre in Dar es Salaam. He offered to remain in East Africa following the war, but his offer was refused by the YMCA. He nearly drown in an unsuccessful attempt to save fellow YMCA secretaries, Ballou and Pritchett in a swimming accident. He came from an African

Methodist Episcopal Church background and after graduating from Howard he became a realtor rather than a minister.

Frederick Douglas Ballou was born in 1891 in Tennessee. He earned a degree from Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee. His YMCA records indicate that he was a printer by profession and a Baptist by denomination. He served in various sites with the East African Expeditionary Force in Kenya and Tanzania. He was waiting to depart the country for the USA when he drowned in a swimming accident on 21 September 1918 in the waters near Dar es Salaam and is buried in that city.

Robert Allen Pritchett was born in 1892, the son of a minister. His YMCA application lists addresses in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Ellicott City, Maryland and Wilmington, Delaware. His YCMA personnel record lists him as a Baptist.²⁰ He graduated from Lincoln University, as did Stanley, in 1917. He was drowned trying to save Ballou in the waters near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 21 September 1918. He is buried next to Ballou.

A.C. Richey was born in 1898 and is listed in the YMCA records as being from East Orange, New Jersey.²¹ He attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. There is no record there of his having graduated. He served as a YMCA secretary to East Africa for only a few months during WWI due to major health difficulties he contracted while there from repeated cases of malaria. He was evacuated to Calcutta where he worked for the rest of the war.

²⁰ YMCA personnel file located at the YMCA Archive, University of Minnesota, St Paul, Minnesota.

²¹ Ibid.

It is clear from these brief introductions that many of these missionaries exceeded even today's academic requirements for missionaries. It is even more significant when one understands the difficulties that many African Americans had in obtaining education in the USA at the turn of the twentieth century. Not only did these missionaries value education for themselves, but as this research will show, they also saw education as being key to the elevation of people both in the USA and in Africa.

Preparatory training for their mission to East Africa

These missionaries went through various training in preparation for their work in East Africa. Representatives of the first two groups of missionaries will be evaluated in terms of their preparation for mission work.²² The preparation of the seven YMCA secretaries was quite different from these earlier missionaries because of the urgency brought on by WWI and their all being recent university graduates with little or no missionary experience.

John J. Coles served as the third corresponding secretary of the Baptist Foreign Mission Board, beginning in 1893. He was appointed corresponding secretary after serving seven years as a missionary in Liberia and died in office after only a few months from diseases he contracted while overseas. He gave the following advice to missionaries who were preparing for overseas work in 1886,

²² This section will focus on the training of Cheek, Delaney and the Branches. Little is known about the Hemans' prior training except that Mr. Hemans was a headteacher of a school in Jamaica.

I. Spiritual Man

1. As he is expected to lead others out of darkness into light, by all means should he be one who is born again.
2. All missionaries should be extremely honest, truthful, and pious.
3. He should be one with a determined will.
4. Don't become a missionary for a name or to be called a spiritual hero. Don't come among heathen to be benefitted nor comforted, but come to benefit and to comfort. If you are not moved by the right and Holy Spirit, better for the cause if you would remain at home.

II. Physical Man. He should be healthy, robust and strong

III. Mental Man

1. Good common sense
2. Uses discretion
3. Not have more zeal than knowledge
4. Not be praised for the number of years he spent in college but for what he knows.

IV. Outfit and Helpmeet

Essential Outfit

1. He must have, a reasonable amount of money to begin work.
2. Bring provisions for use in time of fever.
3. Good medicines or medical chest.
4. Good clothes.
5. Not too many books, but plenty of stationery.
6. Trinkets as gifts.
7. A little stove to heat and dry his room during rains.
8. Oil cloth made "India rubber boots" also bring a good gun, you will need it.

By no means should an inexperienced "pioneer missionary" have the cares of a wife. If he has no spirit of a pioneer, and is coming to build on foundations already dug out, or to live in houses already erected; then he may bring a wife; not only a wife, but a few children. Even then I don't think it best.²³

²³ John J. Coles, *Africa in Brief* (New York: New York Freeman Steam Printing Establishment, 1886), 24-26. Coles was instrumental in founding the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, USA in 1880 which eventually combined with two other agencies to form the National Baptist Convention in 1896.

Although Coles' words may sound austere today, he had learned these lessons from hard experience on the field in the 1880s and 1890s. Since Delaney and Cheek went out under Coles' mission, it would seem fair to assume that they were familiar with his writings. Of the twelve missionaries the Baptist Foreign Mission Board sent out, only one remained on the field when Coles became corresponding secretary. By 1893, when Coles wrote this book, they had either died on the field or become disabled from sickness and returned home. Secretary of the NBCFMB, William Harvey's observation about the 1880-1900 period is quite accurate, "Throughout this history, however, it is apparent that in general American Blacks were hardly more immune to the ravages of climate and disease than were any other people."²⁴

Delaney took a missionary course at Spelman College in addition to her nurse and theological training. She and Cheek were both members of Baptist churches affiliated with the National Baptist Convention and therefore probably had access to denominational literature like the *Mission Herald* which printed letters from its mission station in Nyasaland. Besides this Cheek and Delaney learned about interacting with people from their daily ministries before departing for Nyasaland. Cheek was a pastor and Delaney a school teacher.

As important as a good academic education was, it alone, was not the most essential preparation for the mission field. Thomas and Henrietta Branch, Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) missionaries to Nyasaland in 1902, lacked formal education,

²⁴ William J. Harvey III, *Bridges of Faith Across the Seas* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., 1989), 28. A list of the names and circumstances surrounding the return of these eleven missionaries is on page 27 of Harvey's book.

but they were helped in their work by their daughter Mabel, according to Joseph

Booth in a letter to the SDA mission:

The Branch family are a decided success up to their respective capacity. As you know, the father and mother have a somewhat defective education, and are lacking in educative fitness, but in this direction, their daughter [Mabel] is excellent, and is our most valuable worker now.²⁵

The Branches' success as missionaries was more a result of common sense about people, gained from years of pastoral experience in the USA, than academic training.

Possibly the best preparation for working with people overseas was working with people at home. The Branches had plenty of this type of experience in the USA.

Of all African American YMCA secretaries to East Africa, Max Yergan probably spent the shortest amount of time preparing for his trip. Within five weeks of receiving the 'call' to International YMCA work, he was on a ship going to Calcutta. After working in India for a few months, he volunteered for transfer to East Africa. The urgency caused by WWI certainly had something to do with his quick departure. However, just because Yergan left quickly does not indicate a lack of training on his part. In addition to his academic education, he went through the YMCA training for a new secretary and did graduate work at Springfield college.

Another YMCA secretary, Thomas Hezekiah Lloyd, interrupted his studies to go to East Africa. *The Howard University Journal* included the following article on Lloyd's departure,

Mr. Thomas Hezekiah Lloyd, formerly of Shaw University, now a Sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, has answered the call of the International YMCA for a young man to do foreign mission work among the

²⁵ Joseph Booth to Elder Daniels of the Seventh-day Adventists Mission, 10 October 1902, Joseph Booth papers, Seventh-day Adventists archives, Silver Spring, Maryland (hereafter cited as SDA)

wounded Dutch, Indian, and English Soldiers in far away Africa. Mr. Lloyd will sail from New York in company with Mr. F.D. Ballou of Knoxville College, on February 10th. Their work will consist of doing anything that will ameliorate the suffering condition of the helpless soldiers. Mr. Lloyd leaves with the intention of returning to Howard University at the close of his African Mission.²⁶

After Lloyd graduated from Howard University, he went on to found a real estate company called Lloyd Realty. In an interview with a colleague of Lloyd's, he was remembered as a person who did not like to discuss his war experience.²⁷

William Simons encouraged his sister Evelyn to prepare herself for mission work by studying nursing and making sure she was spiritually prepared before coming. He wrote to her from India:

Now I have heard that you are contemplating a course in missionary training, that there has even been some talk of help for you. Good! Mighty fine! I am prepared to tell you something of actual needs on the mission field—I am in one of the world's greatest.

There has got to be victory somewhere nearer home before there can be victory on the mission field. And believe me the victory on the field is worth the time [and] the fight necessary to win the victory at home.²⁸

The other YMCA secretaries in addition to their YMCA training were all university graduates or undergraduates taking a break in their studies. It will be shown in the following chapter that although none of these missionaries were

²⁶ *The Howard University Journal*, vol. 14, no 14, January 26, 1917, 7. It should be noted that Lloyd and Ballou along with the other five African American secretaries who worked in East Africa worked almost exclusively with African soldiers and carriers and not, as this article says, with Dutch, Indian and English soldiers. The Netherlands was neutral in WWI so it is unlikely that the soldiers referred to in this quote were actually Dutch. The author of this article may have mistaken the Afrikaans troops from South Africa, like General Van der Venter the commander of troops in East Africa, for Dutch troops.

²⁷ Interview with Sam Reynolds, 3 December 1996, Washington, D.C.

²⁸ Simons to Evelyn Simons his sister, 19 November 1919, LOC, William Simons papers, box 5.

graduates of Tuskegee Institute or Hampton Institute, they strongly supported the ideals that these schools taught.

In the early 20th century there was a large debate in America over the type of education that would be offered in the African American community. Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute, represented the more moderate wing of African Americans. He was seen as acquiescing to southern white pressure by accepting a subservient role for African Americans. His educational system was geared to equip African Americans with job skills that met the labor needs of the agricultural economy of the south at that time. One of Washington's many African American critics, W.E.B. DuBois, the scholarly editor of *Crisis* magazine, represented the more radical element of the struggle for equal rights in America. Although both DuBois and Washington shared the common goal of lifting their people to equal status, their educational methods to accomplish this goal were very different.

Booker T. Washington created an educational institution at Tuskegee to fight the slavery of ignorance. His success was based on his ability to see that the type of education needed by the vast majority of African Americans at that time was agricultural and industrial in nature. His view of education was shared, to some degree, by virtually all these missionaries to East Africa. Therefore, it is with little surprise that they saw education as key to their fellow African's spiritual and physical development. They used Washington's methods to meet the relevant needs of the majority of people to whom they ministered in East Africa.

In Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery*, he says of his time at Hampton Institute, "The great and prevailing idea that seemed to take

possession of every one was to prepare himself to lift up the people at his home. No one seemed to think of himself.”²⁹ There is little doubt that this attitude was shared by many in the African American community at that time and was evident in the preparation of these missionaries to East Africa.

However, it would be incorrect to assume that African American missionaries practiced only Washington’s educational methods. They were generally educated in universities, rather than vocational training institutions like Tuskegee. They probably knew that Washington was not far from the truth when he said in 1900, “We learned that about eighty-five percent of the colored people in the Gulf states depended upon agriculture for their living,”³⁰ but they also believed that those that were capable of further education should be given the opportunity to obtain it.

They had attended the academic institutions representative of DuBois’ view of education allowing each to rise as high as he could go. This rejection of artificial limitations on the capabilities of African Americans played an equally important role in these missionaries’ understanding of education. They knew that industrial schools like Tuskegee needed academic institutions to supply it with teachers. DuBois-type schools focused on academic education rather than industrial and agricultural training and virtually all of the missionaries in this study were trained in these academic institutions. However, Washington’s educational methods, which emphasized job

²⁹ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Cambridge: Houghton and Mifflin, 1900, 1901, 1928), 62. This book influenced many African Americans to pursue education as a means of development.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

skills with which to earn a living, were more practical for the vast majority of African Americans at that time.³¹

W.E.B. DuBois felt that education should do more than just train people to serve others. It should help liberate their minds to think creatively. He wrote:

We believe in work. We ourselves are workers, but work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire.³²

It was probably this element of education for liberation that caused colonial administrators in Africa to fear the presence of African American missionaries in their areas and also to try to prevent Africans from going to the USA for education. They were forced by this fear to eventually finance schools in Africa like Lovedale Institute and the South African Native College at Ft Hare.³³

To say that African American missionaries to East Africa represented the educational methods of either DuBois or Washington would be inaccurate. They were in favor of whatever accomplished their goal of uplifting the people. For the vast majority of people in East Africa this involved industrial education along the

³¹ Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 206. King's statement about 'agricultural syllogism (Africa is predominantly rural, therefore it will remain so),' is a valid criticism of the Tuskegee method, which is basically that if it was good for rural workers in the southern USA then it was good for rural workers in East Africa and therefore they have no need to learn more than what would help them work on the farm.

³² W.E.B. DuBois, 'No Cowards or Trucklers,' reprinted in *Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words, 1619-1983*, ed. Milton Meltzer (New York: Harper Trophy, 1984), 152.

³³ See section on Max Yergan in South Africa (chapter 5) for a description of a similar conflict between moderate and radical black South Africans over the kind of education that was to be provided.

lines of Washington. However, identifying academically gifted Africans and helping them to get further education in the USA was also an important part of their mission to East Africa.

Attending conferences was another way that the YMCA secretaries used to prepare for going to the mission field. As a nondenominational organization the YMCA was particularly good at pulling together people from various denominational backgrounds. Most, if not all, of the YMCA secretaries would have regularly attended conferences like the one sponsored in Atlanta in 1914:

The Negro Christian Student Convention recently held at Atlanta was directed by the student YMCA and YWCA; 500 delegates from 88 schools and colleges, 24 college presidents, and 175 religious and educational leaders, white and colored, were present at this Convention, the purpose of which was to study with thoroughness the responsibility of the Negro student for Christian work at home and abroad, and to consider what light Christian thought might throw on co-operation between the races.³⁴

Conferences like these served to increase the vision of students concerning the needs of the world. They were highly motivational and generated much interest among students. However, the students that were moved to action often needed to return to their denominational churches to get their support.

Max Yergan and the six YMCA secretaries were part of the overall war effort in which “three hundred colored secretaries served in the USA and sixty overseas.”³⁵ This number was small compared to the 12,971 white secretaries recruited³⁶ during the war, but it was quite an increase compared to what had been done in the past.

³⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, ed., Editorial, *The Crisis*, vol. 9, no. 1, November 1914, 35.

³⁵ Jesse E. Moorland, ‘The ‘Y’ working with Colored Troops,’ n.d., 2, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

According to Jesse Moorland, senior YMCA secretary of the “Colored Work,” “Not a single colored secretary has been returned from overseas on account of inefficiency”³⁷ This fact does not necessarily prove that these missionaries were well trained for their work, but it does say something about their commitment to it which is a key characteristic for any missionary’s success. Frequently, Moorland would write letters to secretaries in the field encouraging them to endure whatever had to be endured. He often communicated a sense that their behavior would open or close the door of opportunity for future missionaries of their race. This is shown in a letter that Yergan wrote to Moorland concerning the selection of future secretaries:

I am glad that the lot of choosing the men who are coming out was given to our department. I can rest assured now that they are men who will do credit to us. I hope they will come out willing to suffer almost anything. You see we are the first ones out. If we fail, it can always be held as an argument that our men can’t do the work.³⁸

Yergan’s self-sacrificing attitude was characteristic of the African American missionaries who went to East Africa. They were each conscious of the fact that they were pioneers and that their performance would be used to determine whether others of their race would be allowed to enter East Africa as missionaries. Whether this was a fair burden to place on so small a group of missionaries is not being judged here. It is more important to understand that they were preparing themselves as pioneers for others who would follow.

³⁶ Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁸ Yergan to Moorland, 9 December 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

Maintaining connection with home communities

From the correspondence between these missionaries currently available in archives, magazines and journals, it is evident that receiving and sending letters was a very important activity in maintaining their connections with their home communities. Apart from the people they met, they only had books and letters to interact with in the evenings. Though some of them did enjoy hunting wild game for food or gardening as a pastime, most of them were extremely busy just trying to survive from day to day. But, in spite of this, they made time to write letters and to savour news from family members. In this regard, they were no different from the thousands of other missionaries on the continent.

Because they were often socially isolated, keeping in contact with one another was all the more important. Getting together with other African American missionaries was a source of great encouragement to them and also served to maintain a connection with their own culture. Although the Branches station at Malamulo was about 40 miles from Cheek and Delaney at Chiradzulu, they drew great encouragement from visits with each other.

Therefore, to lose one of these co-workers through death or sickness was almost as tragic as losing a family member. William Simons wrote in his diary about the shocking loss of two of his co-workers in a swimming accident:

To my surprise the news came early this AM that Mr. Lines is in town. Later a message from him said that he would be out to see me soon but he did not arrive until after four PM and when he did he knocked all the “stiffening” out

of me by telling me that Ballou and Pritchett are dead—drowned three days ago. I simply could not believe my ears.³⁹

Another way the ethnic connection was maintained with their home community was through financial support. This support was not always from home to the missionary, but rather from the missionary to home. Max Yergan had \$20 transferred monthly to his mother's account from his meager YMCA salary of \$60 per month while in East Africa.⁴⁰ The Hemans sent a regular tithe to a mission in Jamaica. William Simons' mother wrote in a note of thanks to her son, "Did I tell or say thank you for the 25 you gave me? If I did [not] I say it now. Don't know how I would have made it if the Lord had not provided it."⁴¹ Simons was also in the habit of surprising his sisters from time to time with special gifts.

Another example of the selfless giving of these missionaries was the example of Lewis G. Jordan, secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board. This board supported Cheek and Delaney in East Africa. When Rev. Jordan retired after working for over 25 years without a vacation, he was honored by the mission with the title "Secretary Emeritus" and given a pension of \$1200 per year in

³⁹ Simons, diary, 23 September 1918, William Simons papers, LOC. This incident will be further discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁰ Max Yergan, financial records of YMCA war work, n.d., Moorland YMCA War Papers, MSRC.

⁴¹ William Simons, from Simons' mother, n.d., William H. Simons papers, box 5, LOC. This two page letter closes with Mrs. Simons telling her son about going to a mission meeting and giving her last \$.50. She did not have money for groceries but when she arrived home she found \$1.50 in her coat pocket. This modern day example of the 'widow's mite' was not uncharacteristic of African American widows with large families of that day and therefore most likely was passed on to Simons and his sibling. They freely gave their resources and their lives in order to be able to fulfil their mission. Mrs. Simons ends her letter with these words, 'Only those who have been in that condition can tell, [signed]Your Ma.'⁴¹

1921. For the next 18 years until his death in 1939, he donated half of his pension, annually, back to the Foreign Mission Board.⁴²

There are many other examples of selfless giving among these missionaries which prove that they were not trying to get rich or live an easy life by choosing missions as a career. They never forgot where they came from and those who helped them get there, particularly those who helped them get their education. The connection between these missionaries and their home communities was very strong because the debt owed to their own communities for their education and missionary support could never be fully repaid.

In virtually every case these missionaries received salaries from their sending organizations. To this degree they were not faith missionaries who had to raise their salaries themselves. However, the funds that their salaries were paid from were collected as a result of their raising interest by speaking and sharing information about their work.

The Hemans, who went to East Africa in 1888, wrote in a letter to the London Missionary Society, “The Jamaica Churches are making strenuous efforts to raise funds for the Central African Mission and that they desire a letter from me which will tend to rouse the peoples’ interest and stimulate them in their endeavours.”⁴³ This

⁴² Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptists and the Foreign Mission Board* (Kansas City: The Central Seminary Press, 1953), 132. Freeman goes on to state that it was Jordan’s final wish that upon his death a collection should be taken in his memory for Foreign Missions that the work in Africa might be strengthened. p. 179.

⁴³ Hemans to Thompson, general secretary of the London Missionary Society, 16 September 1891, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa Files, microfiche 121.

would indicate that the Hemans' mission was partially funded by the churches of Jamaica.

Cheek wrote a letter to friends appealing for financial aid in the USA that was printed in a local newspaper called *The Richmond Planet*. It was then mailed back to Nyasaland and published in, *The Central African Times* along with a scathing commentary by one of the European settlers suggesting that Cheek be deported. In his effort to keep his supporters informed about the needs and conditions of the mission in Central Africa, Cheek inadvertently gave the enemies of the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Nyasaland ammunition to criticize him. This incident will be discussed in the next chapter, but for now, it demonstrates the importance Cheek put on informing his supporters through correspondence.⁴⁴

Delaney returned to the USA with the primary goal of raising money for her work in Nyasaland. Her frequent letters to Spelman College, her alma mater, convinced its students and faculty to contribute to her mission.

The financial needs of the NBCFMB, which sponsored Cheek and Delaney regularly exceeded the financial resources of the Board. Therefore, in 1923 the Board decided to revise its method of collecting funds from churches. The old method is described like this:

- (1) An agent would go from place to place and church to church begging for money to support the work.
- (2) The churches would send up small donations to the Associations and Conventions.
- (3) Some of the churches would send an Easter offering directly to the Board.

⁴⁴ Letter to the editor, entitled 'An 'Ethiopian' Idea of British Central Africa,' in *The Central African Times*, Blantyre, 2 September 1905. Obtained from the British Library, London.

- (4)Some of the returned missionaries would travel from place to place making speeches and appeals for the Board.
- (5)Whenever a missionary was to leave the country for the Foreign Field, many farewell meetings were held for him and offerings given in that manner.⁴⁵

The new method “required that each church would receive an offering for Foreign Missions each Sunday or at least once per month and these funds were to be sent directly to the Board.”⁴⁶ This systematic monthly giving was found to be much more effective although some traveling by agents and furloughed missionaries was still required.

W.E.B. DuBois states, with a hint of ridicule, that the expenditure of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (NBCFMB) for 1903 of \$8,302.29 only resulted in the following: “Sierra Leone, West Coast African churches, 2; pastors and workers, 3; members, 40... Chiradzulu Blantyre, East Coast Africa—churches 3, pastors and workers, 5; members, 35.”⁴⁷ DuBois did not mention the property and equipment purchased by the mission which was considerable. However, his point is that a large sum of money was expended with little results to show for it. This was not an unusual complaint directed at fledgling missions in Africa, but it was soon forgotten as the missions began to grow in numbers.

⁴⁵ Freeman, *Epoch of Negro Baptists*, 139.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), 120. The National Baptist Convention had purchased 94 acres at its Central African station about this time.

It is not evident how the Seventh-day Adventists funded the Branches, but considering the fact that a considerable number of its constituents were African Americans, it seems reasonable that a portion of the funds collected from these churches were used to fund the Branches' mission.

The funds from the YMCA were raised for the Foreign Department in Africa by sending Max Yergan to speak at branches of the YMCA in various American cities.⁴⁸ Yergan was a prolific letter writer and orator. Through his letters and visits, he kept in touch with many of the YMCA branches that supported the International YMCA work. He was particularly good at keeping his supporters informed of the progress of his work and its current needs.

It is clear that these missionaries were tied financially and otherwise to their home communities during their stays overseas. Their letters, giving and financial support indicated that they maintained strong ties with their sending communities. This maintenance of firm relationship with those in America was important to the success of their mission work in East Africa.

Issues causing the rejection or failure of missionary candidates

Although there were usually many more willing to go to Africa than actually went, finding those who were rejected was not easy to research. The mission boards often did not keep records on applicants once they were rejected.

⁴⁸ Max Yergan, memorandum entitled 'Yergan Fundraiser for 'Y' Work in Africa,' 12 December 1919, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

However, looking at two wellknown persons who were unable to go as missionaries might be helpful in discovering why some trained as missionaries, but did not go. First, Booker T. Washington writes,

After I went to Tuskegee I gave up my ambition of going to Africa. I had not been long there, however, before I was convinced that I could, perhaps, be of larger usefulness through the work I was able to do in this country, by fitting for the same service I wanted to perform, Africans who came as students to America, and by sending from Tuskegee men and women trained in our methods, as teachers and workers among the native peoples.⁴⁹

Washington's feeling that he could do more for Africa from America than from Africa was a significant reason not only for some missionaries not going but for some not returning to Africa as well. Note that Washington willingly gave up his ambition to go and was not rejected by any known mission board. Since a primary qualification of a missionary with the National Baptist Convention was to have a clear 'calling,' it would seem that not having a clear calling would be a good reason for not going.

Washington went on to serve as a Board member of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board as well as helping many others find their calling to Africa as missionaries.

Another well known person who was unable to go as a missionary was Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona

⁴⁹ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of The Negro* (London: T. Fisher Orwin, 1909), 37. History has proven Tuskegee's influence on the missionary effort in Africa. In 'The Negro in Conference At Tuskegee Institute' in *The African Times and Orient Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1912, 12. the students at this conference made the following decision, 'As a result of this meeting it was decided to invite Dr. Booker T. Washington to go to South Africa to meet the members of the South African Union, and seek to find some work basis by which the coloured missionaries of America can have their part in the redemption of the Dark Continent.' Although he never made this trip, the invitation indicates the hopes that were placed on him as a leader.

Beach, Florida. Clarence Newsome, Dean of Howard University School of Divinity, states about Bethune:

Upon completing her evangelistic training at Moody Bible Institute [1896], Mary McLeod applied to the Presbyterian Board of Missions for a missionary station in Africa. She was greatly disappointed and utterly amazed when she was told that there were “no vacancies at that time for colored missionaries.” Not once had she entertained the possibility that she might not spend her life in Africa introducing the tenets of Christianity to her kinsmen.⁵⁰

To be rejected by a mission board for this reason might mean either that the colonial government had banned African American missionaries or that the mission itself had decided that these missionaries were no longer wanted. Most likely it was the later reason.

Evelyn Simons, sister of William Simons, was rejected after years of preparation because of a lack of funds for new missionaries. Her sister writes about her:

Evelyn’s missionary zeal remained with her and in 1920 her church in Washington gave her a scholarship to Shaw University in Durham, NC to study. Her oration subject was, “Africa’s Challenge”. After graduating in 1921, brother William wrote her from Africa advising her not to come unless she knew something about nursing, saying that they needed nurses and doctors more than teachers. The same church paid for her to take nurse training at Freedmen’s Hospital in D.C., but sad to say when she was ready to go the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention was short of funds and were not sending out any new missionaries that year. Evelyn went to Cleveland, Ohio and did Social Service Work, but after a year she left and went to Philadelphia where she did missionary work on her own.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Clarence G. Newsome, ‘Mary McLeod Bethune,’ in *Women in New Worlds*, eds. Hildah F. Thomas and Rosemary S. Keller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 106. Bethune once used a portion of her savings to help Kwame Nkrumah, first president of Ghana, pay his tuition in America. p. 111

⁵¹ Williams, *A Colloquial History of a Black South Carolina Family*, 61.

In spite of their inability to become missionaries, some went on to successful careers in other professions. Therefore, failure to become an African American missionary was not a failure in life, but rather a closed door that might lead to another door being opened.

Other possible reasons for their failure to become missionaries may have been complications concerning what salary they would be paid as African American missionaries in comparison with their white counterparts. Also the issue of social contact between missionaries on the same station probably caused some boards to reject these missionaries.

The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) with its watchphrase, “The evangelization of the world in this generation”⁵² brings up another issue that discouraged African Americans from applying for mission work. Channing Tobias, a YMCA secretary, raises the question that many African American students in 1923 wanted answered before committing themselves to the SVM’s world-wide objectives. He states:

Negro students of America have been puzzled to know why they should be expected to manifest great enthusiasm over Student Volunteer conventions that recruit missionaries for the foreign field when most avenues for the expression of service on their part are securely closed against them. Moreover they are wondering what message a mission board can deliver to a world composed to such a large extent of coloured races, when that board, has drawn the colour line in selecting and sending out its workers.⁵³

⁵² C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publisher, 1979), 231. Mott defined this phrase as, ‘It means to bring Christ within the reach of every person in the world that he may have the opportunity of intelligently accepting Him as a personal Savior. It does not mean the conversion of the world because the acceptance of Christ rest with the hearer and not the speaker.’

⁵³ Channing H. Tobias, ‘Young Men’s Christian Association in American Negro Colleges,’ *The Student World*, vol. 16, no. 2, April 1923, 58. The author gives two exceptions to this general attitude, H.C. McDowell, sent by the Congregationalists to the Gold Coast, and Max Yergan, sent by the

The basic question that Tobias was asking was one that most Euro-American mission boards of that day were generally not interested in addressing. This attitude of the SVM did not encourage African American students to wholeheartedly participate in these movements. This artificial barrier was an internal color bar created by these missions in response to social pressures of the day.

A final word should be said about health, malaria, blackwater fever, dysentery and various other sicknesses which affected African American missionaries just as they did other missionaries. As a result of disease there was a need to be in excellent physical condition before going overseas. Some were no doubt turned away as being physically unfit and others may have realized from the stories they heard from returning missionaries that they could not handle the climate. In any regard, disease was probably the number one danger that anyone living in East Africa at that time had to face. Although none of the missionaries in this research died from disease while in East Africa some of them lost children and they all experienced severe illness. Therefore, health was a major factor in the decision of some of these missionaries not to return to East Africa.

Conclusion

The fact that these missionaries carried with them their western cultural baggage has been brought out. As one African American historian revealed in his

International Committee of the YMCA to South Africa. He writes, 'It is through these two instances mainly that the hope of service abroad is kept alive in Negro students.' p. 61.

discussion of the difficulties of African missions, “Another factor is the civilization found in the other fields as compared to what is found in Africa. All other fields of endeavor had some form of civilization even prior to the Christian Era.”⁵⁴ There is little doubt that this view was held to varying degrees by most of the missionaries in this study as it was by most missionaries of that day.

Walter Williams sums up the overall attitude of these missionaries as they prepared to depart for Africa.

Black missionaries may have been just as ethnocentric as white missionaries, but they did not share the racist sentiments that whites all too often exhibited against even “civilized” Africans. The black missionaries lifted their prejudice once an African accepted Western norms, and they were more than happy to accept her or him as equal.⁵⁵

It should be noted that the common experience between African Americans and East Africans, like racism and African ancestry, meant that African American missionaries had a shorter cultural distance separating them from East Africa than white missionaries. However, this cultural separation could grow further apart or closer together depending on how these missionaries expressed their cultural identity with Africa once they arrived there. The interest they showed upon making contact with local cultures in East Africa determined whether their reconnection would grow stronger or not. It was one thing for African American missionaries to want a cultural reconnection with East Africans, but could they convince the East Africans of this on their part and even further could they convince other African

⁵⁴ Freeman, *Epoch of Negro Baptist*, 150.

⁵⁵ Williams, *Black Americans*, 143.

Americans of this also. The following chapters will evaluate how this cultural reconnection developed as these missionaries entered East Africa.

CHAPTER III

WORK AND CONTEXT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN EAST AFRICA

There comes a time in the history of every person's life when one is called to stand alone with God. If this time is ever fully realized, it is when one must, under divine guidance, choose one's life work.

My interest in missions was awakened in early childhood by a returned missionary, who spoke in behalf of his work in Africa. At the age of thirteen, Rev. James Johnson, then pastor of the First Baptist Church, bade me look in early life from Sinai's threatening brow to the peaceful summit of Calvary and accept Him who is the founder of all missions.¹

Emma B. Delaney

This chapter will discuss the context and experiences of African American missionaries in East Africa starting with Mr. & Mrs. James Hemans who served in the Lake Tanganyika area of what is today Zambia from 1888 to 1905, then proceed to Landon Cheek, Emma Delaney and Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Branch who served in Nyasaland or what is today Malawi between 1901-1907, and finally to the seven YMCA secretaries who served in East Africa, or today Kenya and Tanzania, during WWI: Max Yergan, Thomas Lloyd, William Simons, Walter Stanley, Fred Ballou, Robert Pritchett and A.C. Richey. Later, it will evaluate the attitudes of colonial officials, settlers and other missionaries towards African American missionaries. Finally it will evaluate African American missionary perceptions of Islam and African traditional religions.

¹ Emma B. Delaney, 'Why I Go As A Foreign Missionary', *Spelman Messenger*, vol. 18, no. 5, February 1902, 5.

The Hemans in Zambia

The London Missionary Society (LMS) began in 1795 as an inter-denominational Christian mission. Its stations near the southern end of Lake Tanganyika in Northern Zambia began in 1877. The beginning of this mission is described by Jonathon Bonk:

Financed initially by a £5,000 gift from millionaire Robert Arthington, a missions enthusiast, the first party of six missionaries set about on July 25, 1877, to transport 28,500 pound of supplies from the coast some 830 miles inland to Ujiji, on Lake Tanganyika. The journey, which was to have been accomplished in six months by means of ox-wagons, at a cost of £5,106, in fact took much longer and cost much more. Due to the failure of the oxen pulling the wagons, LMS missionaries had to employ no fewer than 868 native carriers.²

Although the mission began with an abundance of resources and missionaries, the first groups to go were severely depleted by sickness. By 1882 only three of the original twelve missionaries remained in Africa.³ Richard Lovett wrote in 1896, almost twenty years after the beginning of the Central Africa stations:

There is something in the Central African climate which renders it a deadly foe, first to the physical constitution of many men, and through the physical to the moral and spiritual nature of others. About thirty percent of the workers died; about forty per cent proved unequal to the strain.⁴

² Jonathon J. Bonk, *The Theory and Practice of Missionary Identification, 1860-1920*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 48.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 670. Lovett goes on to state about the Central African mission that, 'The tangible results of the mission, so far as statistics go, are not very encouraging. Between the years 1877-1893 thirty-six missionaries—clerical, medical, and artisan—were appointed. Of these, eleven died and fourteen retired, in most cases after a very brief spell of service. The total cost of the work

Goodall describes the circumstances at the Central Africa station in 1898, “The discouragements and tragic losses of many years, together with the burden of overwork and ill health that for so long dogged the survivors, had resulted amongst missionaries in strained relationships and cross-purposes more grave and persistent than any other of the Society’s fields.”⁵

Mr. & Mrs. James E. Hemans were assigned by the LMS to what it admitted was its most difficult mission station. They had been forced by their mission to take second class berths while it provided first class berths for all the European missionaries in their party. Hemans wrote to Wardlaw Thompson, general secretary of the LMS, about their experience on the ship to Africa.:

I know that second class passengers would not be allowed where the first class passengers were; consequently the separation would mean a cutting off of communication between the parties except those of the 1st Saloon would care about coming down to us.

We had unbearable noise from the ship’s crews, third class passengers and some children of our Saloon. They were allowed to run about the Saloon unchecked. One could not with comfort read or pray.

On board the “Oriental” which took us to Zanzibar, the 2nd class apartment was not better than a pig’s sty—a place not fit for any human being. We were told that on the voyage from India, they had severe weather and the sheep were put down there.⁶

during this period was at the lowest calculation £40,000. The number of converts, by the most liberal calculation, was only twenty.’ DuBois’ criticism of Baptist Churches for producing very little for the amount expended could easily be applied here also.

⁵ Norman Goodall. *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) 272. The Hemans are never mentioned in this major historical record of the LMS. This oversight of the contribution made by descendants of Africa demonstrates the need for more research on these missionaries.

⁶ Ibid. For further information on the Hemans see Fergus MacPherson *The Anatomy of a Conquest: The British Occupation of Zambia* (Longman, 1981), 67, 68 and Robert I Rotberg, *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia, 1880-1924* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 159-160. Rotberg briefly summarizes the Hemans’ situation, ‘In one case, color

The Hemans' initial experience with their second class accommodation might be compared to that of former slave Olaudah Equiano's whose impressions of the slave ship that took him from Africa are recorded in his biography. "I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything."⁷ This second class treatment was only the first of many slights that the Hemans were to experience during their eighteen years with the LMS. They often tried to look on the bright side of things and did surprisingly well for many years. Hemans states in the same letter quoted above, "There is a bright side; so bright that when one looks at it, the darkness vanishes and he cannot but exclaim with Addison:—When all Thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys. Transported with the view, I'm lost in wonder, love and praise."⁸ One conclusion

discrimination was the cause of damaging dissension within a synod. The London Missionary Society sent James Hemans, an outspoken West Indian, to its Lake Tanganyika stations with an early group of pioneers. He was a trained teacher and agriculturist but, from the beginning, he was ostracized by his fellow missionaries and deprived of ordinary spiritual fellowship. The Society also denied him privileges that would otherwise have accrued to him because of his age, seniority, and experience. His salary was always less than that of his colleagues. Once, when the Bemba paramount chief wanted specifically to ask Hemans about Christianity, the synod forbade him to visit the chief. They thought that a white missionary should be the first to explain the Society's principles, and to discuss the possible expansion of the London mission into Bembaland. For the chief, however, only Hemans would do. He said: 'I do not want to see the white man just now. I want the one who is of my colour and who can speak so that I might understand him, to come and see me. I will hear whatever he has to say and I will go by his words. He will be my friend.' But the synod was obstinate. It sent a white missionary, who was refused an audience with the chief, and the White Fathers [Catholic] instead occupied most of the Bemba country. Increasingly, Hemans was ignored by his colleagues and criticized behind his back in their letters to the directors.'

⁷ Gustavus Vassa, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African' (1791), reprinted in *The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words*, ed. Milton Meltzer (New York: Harper Trophy, 1964, 1984), 6. Vassa was born in Benin, West Africa around 1745 and was kidnapped into slavery at the age of eleven.

that might be speculated about Hemans' attitude was that he was so overjoyed about fulfilling his calling to Africa that he was able to overlook the slights he experienced on board the ship.

After being delayed by the LMS in Zanzibar the Hemans traveled up to Lake Tanganyika with hardly more than a headache between them. Hemans wrote:

Mrs. Hemans and I came up from Zanzibar to Ujiji quite free of any illness. We got here on Saturday, 3rd November [1888]. For two or three weeks after our arrival, both of us suffered a severe pain in the head caused by indigestion; but thankfully to say, we got well again and have been enjoying the best of health possible.⁹

The Hemans experienced generally good health in a climate that devastated most other missionaries. Hemans wrote concerning the climate, "To us, Mrs. Hemans and myself, it is but our native (mountain) air." This appears to be a reference to Jamaica where the Hemans lived before they went to Africa.

Another insight into the endurance of the Hemans is found in this letter he wrote to Thompson, dated 5 July 1892, over three years after their arrival:

Last night, as I sat, writing, I was interrupted by a rap at the door; on opening it, I was met by three of the lads wishing to speak to me. I called them in and asked them to say on. They told me that they have found out that they were sitting down as fools notwithstanding they have been hearing of the love of Jesus but have decided to be so no longer and wish to make known publicly that they are followers of Jesus. Have we no cause for joy, will you not share it with us?¹⁰

⁸ Hemans to Thompson, 7 February 1889, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 108, row e.

⁹ Hemans to Thompson, general secretary of the London Missionary Society (hereafter cited as LMS) 7 February 1889, fiche 108, row e, Central Africa Files, Council for World Mission, School of Oriental and African Studies archive, London (hereafter cited as CWM, SOAS).

¹⁰ Hemans to Thompson, 5 July 1892, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 125, row c. The emphasis in this quote is in original.

Even more significant than these adjustments was the Hemans' cultural affinity with the Lungu people. The LMS had three stations in the southern Lake Tanganyika area, one at Kambole, one at Fwambo and one at Niamkolo. This area was populated by the Lungu tribe which spoke KiLungu as well as KiSwahili. The Bemba people were further south and east of the Hemans and were sometimes mentioned in LMS correspondence as an area it wanted to expand into. The headquarters of the Scottish Presbyterian Livingstonia mission in Nyasaland, headed by Robert Laws, was approximately 300 miles east with its nearest station to the LMS stations at Mwenzo, where Dr. James Chisholm was stationed, about 150 miles away. Both Laws and Chisholm played key roles in the LMS mission station and particularly in helping to rescue the Hemans in 1905.¹¹

As part of his orientation to his new work, Hemans was told by his mission to send the people to his supervisor as the head of the station and not to give them direction himself. Hemans mentions the difficulty he experienced with this directive:

I told him I think it is but natural that they will come to us. They know we are their own race. They generally say we are their relatives; are alike in skin and their hearts tell them to come to us in preference. We have told them very plainly that Mr. Jones is the chief of the village... but two thirds at least have often refused.¹²

¹¹ The story of the Hemans' departure from Africa and the LMS will be addressed in the next section.

¹² Hemans to Thompson, 6 January 1892, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 124. The emphasis in this quote is Hemans'. The Hemans' experience with racial prejudice was not uncommon for African American missionaries who served under predominantly white mission boards at this time. See chapter 1 for the history of this attitude. Even YMCA secretaries were seen by some in that organization as being handicapped by their color. See footnote 167 of this chapter on Max Yergan by Parry Park of the YMCA, 'His colour handicap is overcome with a spirit of humility and devotion to the Cause,...'

The Hemans' affinity for the Lungu people helped them in their adjustment to Africa. They also expressed their affinity for the people through their adoption of an infant who had apparently been found abandoned in the bush. They never had any children of their own and this adopted son fulfilled a desire they had for children. Hemans writes to Thompson at the LMS office of this adoption in his third year on the field, "The infant who was found in the forest, down at the Lake, was given to us and was not having any of his own [family], we have adopted him. As soon as we hear from you again, he will be christened."¹³

Hemans states in this same letter that since arriving in Africa just over two years earlier, "We wrote many letters to relatives and friends, but have not been the recipient of a single reply with exception of yours."¹⁴ This lack of family contact coupled with the affinity they felt with the Lungu people may have encouraged them to adopt a child. The Hemans were in an isolated area, at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika, which in 1888 was ruled by Arab traders, local tribal chiefs, and European governments vying for power. Since the Arab traders were generally despised by missionaries for their association with the slave trade and the local chiefs were seen by the European missions as racially inferior, most mission agencies, like the LMS, placed their hopes for good government on the establishment of European, political administration in the area. The LMS reported in 1908 that the presence of

¹³ Hemans to Thompson, secretary of the London Missionary Society, 19 January 1891, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 117, row a. It was unusual, but not unheard of for European missionaries to adopt Africans. For example see the numerous adoptions of Africans by Mary Slessor, Scottish missionary to Calabar, Nigeria. She adopted twins to prevent them from being exposed to the elements as was a cultural practice.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

resident British magistrates near its Central Africa stations had relieved the missionaries from any possible complicity in political affairs.¹⁵ How true this was in practice is hard to prove, but it was clear that the LMS missionaries saw British administration as a relief that allowed them to focus on their primary task of mission work.

Like any missionary entering a new culture, one of the Hemans' first priorities was to learn how to communicate with the local people. Because of his linguistic ability, he was able to develop a closer affinity with the indigenous people. However, this also resulted in other missionaries on his station feeling jealousy towards him.¹⁶ Hemans writes shortly after arriving in Africa, "The Chief seems very friendly to us. He likes to call on us, but the difference is, we cannot converse with one another. We hope in a few months by God's blessing, to be able to speak to these people in their own language."¹⁷ After only three months in the country, Hemans was able to report, "I have been working very hard studying the language and assisting Mr. Jones in building houses and making fences...I can in many things explain myself to the natives, in their language. God be praised."¹⁸ Many of the

¹⁵ Bonk, *Missionary Identification*, 114.

¹⁶ Fergus Macpherson, interviewed on 10 July 98, states that it was the linguistic affinity of the Hemans that was partially the cause of their rift with the other missionaries. Bonk, *Missionary Identification*, 24-25, states, "Of those missionaries remaining in Central Africa, only Hemans and Robertson seem to have acquired reasonable competence in the vernacular. The evidence suggests that the Central African Mission fell short of the linguistic ideal spelled out in the *General Regulations* of the LMS. A high mortality rate and frequent illness, together with political instability, lack of coherent continuity in mission policy, and the social isolation of the missionaries - all conspired to make mastery of Central African vernaculars by LMS missionaries the exception, rather than the rule." See map of Africa with location of the Hemans' mission station on chapter 1, page 50.

¹⁷ Hemans to Thompson, 1 December 1889, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 108, row b.

local languages, like KiLungu and KiSwahili, were part of the Bantu language group and therefore had some similarities. However, distinguishing those differences could often be as difficult as learning a new language.

Although all the Hemans' co-workers were European missionaries, they varied greatly in their views of the Hemans. First, consider a positive letter written to the LMS by missionary G. MacKendrick concerning the Hemans:

I should like to express to you, what I have already expressed to the members of our District Committee, my appreciation of the good work which Mr. & Mrs. Hemans have done and are doing in this place. No one, apart from those living for a short time at the station can have any idea of the magnitude of the work done by our good brother and his wife and that in the face of many difficulties which have been unnecessarily thrown in their way, Niamkolo station is in such a position as might make any missionary proud of it....Some good friends have said to me that their colour is very much against them—that because they are not white people they have not the same influence with the natives. My answer to such a view would be, 'facts are altogether against such an idea.' My little experience is such as to lead me to say that Mr. and Mrs. Hemans have as much influence with the natives here as any Englishman and a great deal more than most of them in this part of the country.¹⁹

The Hemans in turn expressed appreciation for the care that MacKendrick gave them during an illness at their Niamkolo station, "We are highly pleased that Rev.

MacKendrick has been sent out and appointed to this station. I feel certain that if he were not here and by God's goodness, either my wife or I or both of us would have died a few weeks ago."²⁰

¹⁸ Hemans to Thompson, 7 February 1889, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 108, row e.

¹⁹ G. MacKendrick to Thompson at the London Missionary Society office, 26 January 1901, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 167, row a.

²⁰ Hemans to Thompson, 20 February 1901, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 167, row d.

However, there were also some negative evaluations of the Hemans' which eventually led the LMS to send an independent commission headed by Robert Laws of Livingstonia, Nyasaland. Hemans writes in a letter concerning his supervisor at his station, "By various actions of Mr. Jones toward us it will be clearly seen that we have been held on a level with and in some respect lower than the native servants."²¹ He also states that one of his co-workers held the following view about their coming to Africa, "It was asserted, before we (my wife and I) arrived here in "88" that coloured people should not be sent to this country and had the Directors wished, they should get men from South Africa."²² In the latter decades of the nineteenth century the Scottish Livingstonia mission in Nyasaland was positive toward the sending of South African missionaries from Lovedale,²³ but eventually they dropped the idea probably for the same reasons that American mission boards stopped sending African American missionaries to Africa. The European missionaries found it difficult relating to African and African American missionaries on an equal basis and sometimes saw their ministries with the indigenous people as being in competition with their own.

²¹ Hemans to Thompson, 6 January 1892, CWM,SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 124.

²² Ibid. For a further study on the history of African missionaries from South Africa to Central Africa see the research by Jack Thompson on William Koyi in *True Love and Roots* (Chilema: Christian Communications Programme, 1989). Also see the article by the same author 'An Independent Church which never was: The case of Johnathan Chirwa,' in *Exploring New Religious Movements* eds. A.F. Walls and Wilbert R. Shenk (Elkhart: Mission Focus, 1990) 107-118.

²³ Lovedale was founded in Alice, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa in 1841 by the Glasgow Missionary Society to train Africans as teachers and clergy. It eventually was further developed into a secondary school by its principal Dr. James Stewart of the Free Church of Scotland.

The issue of the equality of these missionaries with European missionaries created difficulties for the European mission boards in Asia as well as in Africa.

This was expressed by V. S. Azariah, who later became the first Anglican bishop of Indian descent, in his address at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Azariah's views could easily have been applied to Africa at that time:

The pioneer missionaries were 'fathers' to the converts. The converts in their turn were glad to be their 'children.' But the difficulty in older missions now is that we have a new generation of younger missionaries who would like to be looked upon as fathers, and we have a new generation of Christians who do not wish to be treated like children.²⁴

Azariah saw the same need in India as the Hemans and many others saw in Africa. When people are treated in a condescending manner, true fellowship is stifled and this results in a rift in the relationship which eventually may lead to a break.

After ten years with the LMS in Africa, Hemans was finally appointed as a member of the District Committee. This committee voted on most of the day-to-day decisions concerning the mission in Central Africa.²⁵ This right to vote in the District Committee was usually granted to a missionary upon completion of a language exam after a few years on the field. This delay in placing Hemans, who

²⁴ V.S. Azariah, 'The Problem of Co-operation Between Foreign and Native Workers,' in *History and Records of the World Missionary Conference 1910* (Edinburgh: 1910) 310. Azariah's address was delivered in the Assembly Hall on Monday evening, 20 June 1910. His appeal to the European missionaries present was for 'friends' and that a 'feeling of equality and freedom shall pervade our relations and our intercourse with one another.' p. 309. James T. Campbell makes a similar point as Azariah's, 'While 'old' missionaries such as Robert Moffat and John Philip were remembered as humble, pious, and untainted by racism, their successors were characterized as arrogant, supercilious, and racist....While early missionaries were rarely apostles of racial equality, they generally attributed Africans, 'benighted' condition to experience and environment rather than race; with proper guidance, the African constituted an 'improvable member of the human species.' *Songs of Zion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 111.

²⁵ Hemans to Thompson thanking him for appointment to the Central Africa District Committee after 10 years on station, 2 November 1898, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 149, row a.

was a headteacher in Jamaica, on the District Committee shows that he was viewed cautiously by the LMS. As belated as the LMS might have been in giving Hemans an equal vote on the District Committee, it was still a major step toward admitting him to full partnership in the mission. Even so, Hemans was treated with mistrust by his co-workers and subjected to unfair accusations. He regularly had to prove that his presence on the mission station was not a mistake. In a letter to Thompson concerning some accusations made against him by co-workers early in his missionary career, Hemans states, "As called upon to clear myself of this scandalous report—to be no impediment in the way of Afric's sons returning to the land of their ancestors to lead their kindred into the glorious liberty of the children of God. I ask leave to speak with freedom so that the subject be viewed from its real stand-point."²⁶

Hemans clearly felt that his performance as a missionary could affect the opportunities of other missionaries of African descent to gain access to Africa. In many ways, the Hemans were pioneer missionaries to this part of Africa and they were aware of their responsibilities to those who might follow them. This also may have been a factor in their longevity with the LMS.

It should be noted that although there was a general feeling of affinity between the Hemans and Lungu people, there were also occasions when such an affinity was not so apparent. In a letter from Hemans to Thompson, after three years in Africa, he gave this evaluation of the local people, "I have, for the last three years been striving to study the people so as to find out the best way of approaching them;

²⁶ Hemans to Thompson, 6 January 1892, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 124.

and have come to the conclusion that even the most intelligent of them are but children and need to be dealt with as such.”²⁷ Although at times this view is present in Hemans’ letters, it was not consistently stated. However, it is mentioned here to show that they were not immune to attitudes of cultural superiority.

Hemans revealed some of the tension on his mission station at Niamkolo when he writes about charges brought against him by his supervisor, “There are numberless instances in which our feelings have been greatly tried and our principles tested but with the work at heart, we bore them patiently. No one in the Mission or elsewhere—not even intimate friends in Jamaica knew anything of the trials we endured.”²⁸ They endured whatever they had to for the sake of fulfilling what Hemans often referred to as ‘God’s calling.’ To them it was part of the cost of accepting that ‘call’ to Central Africa with the LMS. The question must be asked is as the Hemans came to the end of their eighteen years in Africa what role did racism on their station play in their departure? Up to this point the Hemans were able to exist on the Niamkolo station, but their final years there were fraught with racial accusations and strife which ultimately led to their dismissal.

²⁷ Hemans to Thompson, 16 September 1891, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, microfiche 121. Having read every letter that Hemans wrote to the London Missionary Society over his 18 years on the mission field, this quote by him was not generally indicative of his view of the people of Africa. However, it is included to show that the Hemans did not always identify with the culture they worked in. It would be worth looking into archival sources in Jamaica for further diaries and letters of the Hemans that may still exist. The University of the West Indies archives indicated that they do not hold any records on the Hemans.

²⁸ Hemans to Thompson, 6 January 1892 concerning charges brought by his supervisor D.P. Jones, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 124.

The Hemans' departure from the LMS

Of all the missionaries in this research, the Hemans' departure from Africa was the most controversial. In looking through the London Missionary Society (LMS) files of Central Africa, it was surprising to find how often the missionaries there disciplined and censured each other. In light of the large number of deaths that occurred among them, the frequent sicknesses that they all experienced and the general difficulties they had in ministering crossculturally, it seems they spent an inordinate amount of energy criticizing one another. People in this kind of situation might be expected to experience a high level of stress in their lives, but to turn on each other was no doubt the least helpful solution to their difficulties. Goodall gave some indication of the difficulties on the Niamkolo station:

In 1895 a staff of eight missionaries was further reduced to six by ill health, and with four of them on furlough only two were actually at work, coping with the responsibilities of three widely separated stations. For several more years reinforcements scarcely kept pace with the losses. In one year alone (1901) three men died while still in their prime.²⁹

The Hemans were by no means the first LMS missionaries in Africa to be disciplined, nor was this incident the first event of correction for them. As much as race played a part in what happened, the immaturity and lack of education of many of the missionaries involved also played their part. There were also factors, such as health and climatic conditions which were beyond their control.

²⁹ Goodall, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, 270-271.

The departure of the Hemans began with a special meeting of the District Committee of the Central African mission on 18 April 1904. This meeting was called to consider various charges against the Hemans. These charges when written in great detail can be summarized in three categories: Attitude toward fellow missionaries, attitude toward the LMS and attitude toward Africans. The list of charges brought against Hemans were immediately refuted by him as they were read. In response to the charge that he mistreated Africans, Hemans asked that the Africans be brought to give testimony. However, the Committee refused to receive 'native evidence.' Although this was keeping with the attitude of many European missionaries of that time, it was indicative of their attitude towards the very people they were supposed to be serving.³⁰ The striking thing about the charges is the frequent use of the word 'attitude.' Understood in the context of a 1904 pioneer mission station, attitude hardly seemed to justify the severe punishment of suspension. The final decision of the District Committee was as follows:

In conclusion the D.C. passed the following resolution, 'That as Mr. Hemans has acted in defiance of the wishes of this Committee and that his conduct has not been consistent with that of a Christian Missionary we suspend him in accordance with Reg. no. 91 and that the Board be informed that it is impossible for us to work harmoniously with him.'

³⁰ Minutes of the Central Africa District Committee, 18 April 1904, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 1045, row a. The charges brought against the Hemans were summarized here in six divisions. 1. 'Attitude to Co-workers at Niamkolo,' Hemans was accused of withholding information from his station head, Mr. J. Lawson, 2. 'Attitude to missionary brethren in general,' Hemans was accused of being unwilling to turn over half his house to a younger missionary family. 3. 'Attitude to the Committee as a body,' Hemans was accused of not following the directions of the Committee. 4. 'Enquiries into accounts and malezi,' Hemans was accused of selling produce from his extensive fruit and vegetable gardens to the LMS. 5. 'Attitude to native immoral conduct,' Hemans was accused of allowing a man accused of adultery to be reinstated in his job on the station. 6. 'Attitude to natives,' Hemans was accused of throwing hot water on a boy and thus scalding him, that Mrs. Hemans had bit the ears of her servant girl, that Mr. Hemans had forced a sick girl to walk a great distance to see a doctor, and that he had stood by while a man beat his wife for adultery.

Proposed (signed)W. Draper
 Seconded (“)H.C. Nutter
 In favour (signed)R. Stewart Wright
 (“)Harold E. Wareham
 (“)E. Winbolt Lewis
 Concurring (signed)Bernard R. Turner
 (“)Ernest H. Clark
 Against (signed)Harry Johnson³¹

Some religious groups practiced shunning as a way of disciplining errant members. However, in an isolated community like that surrounding Niamkolo it was a serious punishment indeed. The members of the District Committee apparently hoped the Hemans would be removed by the LMS or quit themselves. The decision of the Committee was transmitted by mail to the LMS Board in London which took months to get there. In a real sense the Hemans needed to be rescued from their colleagues. The LMS finally decided to send a deputation, led by Robert Laws of Livingstonia, to the station to try and sort out the difficulties, but due to the slowness of the mail and travel in 1904 the deputation was delayed for over a year, leaving the Hemans in a precarious position.

Hemans had previously cautioned the LMS repeatedly about the need for a deputation to come and visit the station. He wrote to Thompson as early as 1899:

If I had the power to act, I presume that I would have been able to turn the tide, but with no authority and being a coloured person notwithstanding of longest experience, your members would not be advised....Writing will not avail-only a deputation will be effectual in putting our work on a proper basis.³²

³¹ Ibid. This is the conclusion of the above document.

³² Hemans to Thompson, 14 June 1899, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 155, row b.

The other missionaries on the station suffered from inexperience, high turnover due to sickness and death, and the inability to take the advice of experienced well educated missionaries like the Hemans. As the years passed and the Hemans' survived where others perished they gained a sense of what was necessary to endure in that setting. The Hemans endurance may have intimidated the other missionaries many of whom were artisans sent to help start an industrial training school. The LMS had been frustrated for years with this station and yet for many years it did little to correct the situation. The sending of a deputation was its first serious attempt to set right a complicated web of difficulties that had nagged this station for years and threatened to pull it apart in 1904. The missionaries on the station responded to the LMS Board's decision to send a deputation with the following message:

Our decision,—That we find it impossible to work with Mr. Hemans—was arrived at after long and careful deliberation and with a full sense of what it involved. We feel more strongly than ever, that if the best interests of this mission are to be secured, Mr. Hemans must be moved.³³

They even went so far as to write emphatically to Laws at Livingstonia, “To repeat, we still think that in respect to the Commission laid upon you re the Hemans Case, your visit will prove futile....We are writing home a letter which we hope will convince the Board that the only solution to the present most unhappy state of affairs is the withdrawal of Mr. Hemans.”³⁴ The idea that their problems would be solved if the Hemans were removed could not have been further from the truth. Even Laws,

³³ E.Winbolt Lewis to Thompson, 4 November 1904, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 192 row d.

³⁴ Winbolt Lewis to Laws, 11 November 1904, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 192 row d.

although he had never been to the station before, knew that there was more to the situation than just the Hemans. He was very straightforward in sharing his views in this letter to Thompson:

In addition to the matter of Mr. Hemans, from what I have heard, it strikes me that there are several matters in connection with the general working and policy of your mission that need looking into. I have got the impression that there is a waste of time, strength & means, and a lack of unity of work and development which is sadly hindering the progress of the work of the mission, and weakening its work as opposed to the compactness reported of Roman Catholic effort.³⁵

After receiving the letter from Lewis, Laws naturally wondered about the wisdom of his visit. He offered this alternative to the LMS Board:

Is it not possible that seeing several of the members of your mission are at home, and another two will be soon, by you asking Mr. & Mrs. Hemans to return home also, you could hold the necessary inquiry and decide there? I mention this, because I heard that whatever decision might be come to, Mr. & Mrs. Hemans intend to leave the mission, but mean to hold on till an investigation is made.³⁶

The LMS probably rejected this suggestion because Laws proceeded with his plans to visit the mission.

The Hemans' distress at being cut off from communication and fellowship on the station was very real. Hemans' letter to Thompson after five months of suspension indicates that he was feeling some tension:

I have not heard whether Dr. Laws will be coming or not, nor have I been allowed to take any part in the work of the mission. Since my suspension, I have not been allowed to see any official correspondence or letters from the Board nor to know anything about the affairs of the mission under the circumstances I shall be exceedingly pleased and greatly obliged if you would, as soon as possible, let me know what to do.³⁷

³⁵ Laws to Thompson, 17 November 1904, CWM, SOAS, microfiche 191, row b.

³⁶ Laws to Thompson, 21 February 1905, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa files, fiche 193, row b.

After almost a year of waiting for the Board's action the following response by Hemans to Thompson concerning the proposal to send Laws was surprisingly confident, "Although like David, I am alone against the whole Committee yet I have no fear for the God of truth whom I have been serving is able to deliver me."³⁸

Laws and his United Free Church of Scotland colleague from Mwenzo, Dr. James Chisholm, arrived at the LMS station at Niamkolo on 22 May 1905 and began their proceedings the next day. At Laws' request, the meetings were held in the Hemans' house with all members of the other stations at Kambole and Fwambo in attendance. Laws' diary entry for 23 May 1905 indicates the seriousness and sensitivity with which he handled the meetings:

I opened the proceedings by reading I Cor 12 and engaging in prayer which helped me much and I tried to carry all with me into the presence of God. I then stated my commission as some did not know its intent....The strain of these two days has been very heavy. The practical outcome of the case in Dr. Chisholm's mind as well as my own is that Mr. Hemans' suspension must be rescinded, but it would be unwise for him to be sent back to this field.³⁹

At the close of the two days of deliberations, Laws wrote in his diary on 25 May, "All gathered at 5 pm and after prayer I thanked all for the help they had given me and amid a profound stillness read our memorandum and decision."⁴⁰ Laws read the following document to them and then mailed it to the LMS office in London:

³⁷ Hemans to Thompson dated 10 October 1904, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, microfiche 193, row a.

³⁸ Hemans to Thompson, n.d., CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, fiche 191, row a.

³⁹ Laws, diary, 23 May 1905, Robert Laws papers, Gen 561/1, EUL. There is much in these Laws' diaries and papers that give a firsthand background of the conditions in Nyasaland during this period.

⁴⁰ Laws, diary, 25 May 1905, Robert Laws papers, Gen 561/1, EUL.

Memorandum of the results of the commission held at Niamkolo, Central Africa, May 23-25, 1905, regarding the case of Mr. J.E. Hemans, by authority of the Directors of the London Missionary Society.

After careful investigation and consideration of the parts of Div. I & IV not already withdrawn, I can only come to the conclusion, that, however regrettable the relationship revealed by those as existing between Mr. Hemans and his fellow workers there are no grounds to justify his suspension.

Div. V and VI deal with much more serious matters, and at the outset I ought to state clearly that the present investigation has brought to light facts & explanations, which were not before the D.C. at the time their minute was drawn up & certainly cannot be left out of account in coming to a just decision on the subject.

After going carefully into the case dealt with in Division V (man dismissed for adultery) and taking into account new facts brought out in the course of examination, and explanations offered, nothing beyond an error of judgement on the part of Mr. Hemans in his treatment of Kipapa could be affirmed, and this error of judgement would have to be affirmed regarding his late colleague as well.

Division VI. From cruelty to adults, as detailed in the two cases mentioned, Mr. Hemans is acquitted. Cruelty to children. Using the teeth whether in reality or in pretence can only be reprehended. The other practices referred to as "kutonda" may not have been intended as punishment by Mr. & Mrs. Hemans but would certainly be liable to give such an impression to any European, & to many natives of other tribes, and should not be practiced.

In the course of the investigation of these charges, there has been evident, on both sides, an undercurrent of distrust, jealousy, & perhaps even prejudice or bias, which by a cumulative effect has destroyed harmonious working, has seriously hindered the progress of the work of the mission as a whole, & had not a little to do with bringing about the formulating of the charges under consideration.

On the side of Mr & Mrs. Hemans there has been a sensitiveness on the colour question, which the past history & present position of their race have given but too good cause for existence. His position of senior missionary has been rather prominent to his mind and at times he has been probably too ready to misunderstand his younger colleagues in their communications with him, leading to further misunderstanding. He has also forgotten, I think, the different surroundings and education of the younger colleagues & the difference of outlook these imply.

On the other hand it is difficult for the European to entirely rid himself of a subconscious bias on the colour question. The very endeavours of the missionary, brethren and sisters to avoid anything of the kind and to treat Mr. & Mrs. Hemans as really one of themselves may have led to an appearance of consciousness of this difference which they never even dreamed of cherishing. Possibly too the younger missionaries in their ignorance of the people and of the past history of the mission on account of their inability to comprehend the outlook of Mr. & Mrs. Hemans, have failed to recognize the immense advance they have made from the position of their ancestors, & the solid, valuable, Christian qualities & work they have exhibited & done. In some cases also it seems to me a subconscious bias had been implanted in their minds by their arrival on their field of labour, & this has proved detrimental to harmonious working in the past. After the discussions and relationship of the past year, the prospect of future harmony would be dubious in the extreme.

I desire here to express my grateful satisfaction with the help rendered by both parties in this part of the commission I have been called upon to undertake. It has been a pleasant surprise to find that on both sides there has been a desire to do justice to their opponent, and to withdraw any statement which further reflection or remembrance showed them was not exactly correct.

The finding to which I am led is:—

That on consideration of all the past evidence, & what has now been produced, the suspension of Mr. Hemans is rescinded.

On account however of the evident incompatibility in the past, of the various parties concerned, to continue the same relationship in the future would not be for the comfort of the mission. & might, by possible friction, seriously hamper its satisfactory progress. As the furlough of Mr. & Mrs. Hemans is due, they should take it as soon as can be conveniently arranged & I advise that the Directors should find work for them in another field of labour; therefore in accordance with the powers conferred by the Directors on me, I authorize the Treasurer to make the necessary arrangements.

(signed) Robert Laws⁴¹

⁴¹ Laws report to Thompson on the Hemans, 29 May 1905, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, fiche 195, row a and b. The emphasis in this quote is Laws'. 'Kutonda,' according to the *Dictionary of the Nyanja Language* by David C. Scott, (originally published in 1892) revised and enlarged by Alexander Hetherwick (London: United Society for Christian Literature Lutterworth Press, 1929 revised 1965), means 'to take possession of by force, take from another what is rightfully his, take to the exclusion of others.' See footnote 30 of this chapter for an explanation of the charges against the Hemans.

James Chisholm added his signature to this document and wrote the following statement, "I concur entirely in the above."⁴²

It must have been a relief for everyone, not the least of whom were the Hemans, to finally have this issue settled. However, because Laws had been commissioned with the authority of the LMS Board, it did not matter if they agreed with his decision or not. As Laws' diary entry for 25 May states, "Mr. Stewart Wright got up and thanked us and expressed satisfaction with the finding. Mr. Hemans also got up and did the same."⁴³ The LMS had finally given support to the Hemans by clearing them of all charges. However, it was not soon enough to keep them in the mission.

As the deputation came to a close, an event occurred that indicated the desire of the Hemans to be reconciled with their team-mates before leaving the country. Laws politely invited himself and Chisholm to lunch at the Hemans' house the following day. The Hemans not only agreed to host Laws and Chisholm, but all the other missionaries on the station as well.⁴⁴ Credit must be given to the Hemans for

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Laws, diary, 25 May 1905, Robert Laws papers, Gen 561/1, EUL.

⁴⁴ Laws, diary, 26 May 1905, Robert Laws papers, Gen 561/1, EUL. Almost thirty years later Laws published his memoirs, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934), 210. Laws summarized his encounter with the Hemans in this way, 'Unfortunately, according to the constitution of the London Missionary Society, each missionary in charge of a station was practically independent of his fellow-missionaries at neighbouring stations. This led to awkward results when questions regarding native customs and mode of life had to be dealt with from a Christian standpoint, as individual missionaries might have each his own opinion, and different attitudes towards native customs might be the result....I invited the missionaries to discuss the questions which had arisen. Eventually they came to a definite understanding with regard to the treatment of the problems under review and arranged to meet together in future as a council, so that they might be of one mind in all matters relating to Mission policy.' Either because of experience or because they identified with the local people, it is evident from the charges brought against the Hemans by their colleagues that the Hemans held a liberal view of the need for African culture to conform to Christianity and their

this gesture toward their co-workers, none of whom seemed apologetic for what they had put the Hemans through for no good reason. Even though the Hemans were cleared of all charges these missionaries made against them, they had gotten what they wanted most, the removal of the Hemans. Seeing the hardened attitudes of these young missionaries, Laws decided that the removal of the Hemans was for the 'comfort of the mission.' He effectively found them guilty of being incompatible with these missionaries and recommended that they be reassigned.

Having survived 18 years on what was the LMS's most difficult station it seems their treatment was, to say the least, unfortunate. The history books have been even less kind to the Hemans, largely ignoring their contribution. Their story was one of perseverance in their calling in the midst of difficult circumstances.

The LMS secretary Thompson acknowledged Laws' decision in the following letter:

I have to thank you for your cablegram of June 13 informing us of the result of your enquiry into the charges against Mr. and Mrs. Hemans. We have sanctioned the return of Mr. and Mrs. Hemans on furlough and I suppose they are already on their way. I shall read with interest the fuller account of your proceedings which will come to us in due course. My present feeling is that the best thing for Mr. and Mrs. Hemans and ourselves would be for him honourably to retire to his home in Jamaica where, if he does not suffer too much from swollen head, he may now do very useful work as a pastor among his own people. My recent correspondence with the Central African Mission has made me fear that the trouble I refer to is not entirely confined to Mr. Hemans and that there are one or two other members of the Mission whose health might be greatly improved by a judicious course of blood-letting!⁴⁵

colleagues held strict views. According to Laws' memoirs, this was the cause of their conflict. No doubt the polity of the LMS that allowed missionaries on the field to suspend one another needed to have more than just a majority vote to enact it. Even the suspended missionary should have some rights to fellowship and appeal while on the field.

⁴⁵ Thompson to Laws, 1 July 1905, CWM, SOAS, Africa outgoing correspondence microfiche 291, row a. Surprisingly almost a year after the Hemans had left the field the issue of their suspension was raised again by the Central Africa District Committee. 'Resolution of the Central Africa D.C. 1. That

This letter confirms that the Hemans were not seen by Thompson as the only difficulty on this station. However, Thompson seems to accuse Hemans in his pejorative statement of having a 'swollen head.' He suggests that for reasons not unlike the Heman's co-workers, he thought that as senior missionaries they would be better off working in Jamaica. The issue before the Hemans was one of supervision which was the very issue that caused many Africans and African Americans to start independent or Ethiopian churches. In being the senior missionary in terms of experience on the station in Central Africa, Hemans knew that the only reason he was not put in charge of one of the stations was because of his race. His mission believed that his race required him to have white supervision and that to put him in charge of a station or even a substation was the last resort.

Had the Hemans accepted their role as assistant missionaries to the younger, inexperienced, and largely artisan missionaries on their station they probably would have been welcomed to stay on indefinitely. However, Hemans dared to speak up as an equal with his fellow missionaries who to some degree should have respected him simply for having survived on a difficult station for so many years. For speaking up

this Committee is surprised at the conclusion arrived at by the Board as expressed in its resolution and in the letter (no. 1143) of the Foreign Secretary, regarding Dr. Laws' report on the charges brought against Mr. Hemans. It was not the impression left on this Committee by Dr. Laws. This committee understood that in Dr. Laws' opinion the charges did not justify the suspension of Mr. Hemans. Had it understood that the draft of the report submitted by Dr. Laws meant that Mr. Hemans had been cleared of the charges brought against him, it would not have approved the report. This committee does not agree that Mr. & Mrs. Hemans were cleared of the charges.' McFarlane to Thompson, 2 March 1906, CWM, SOAS archive, Central Africa files, fiche 199, row b. This response would indicate that the comment by Thompson to the effect that the Hemans were not the only problem on their station was correct.

he was accused of having a 'swollen head' and dismissed by the LMS. Hemans was unwilling to accept the status quo and for this he was disciplined.

In another letter, written a few months later to Laws, Thompson revealed the depth of his frustration with the Central Africa stations:

A very heretical and treacherous idea has been in my mind ever since I read your statement about our mission. I have not ventured to air it before the Directors, though I have had a talk with the Chairman of our committee and with my colleague on the subject. It is this, why should not the Livingstonia Mission take over the whole of our work on the plateau? You have been enabled in God's providence to establish yourselves strongly and to develop your work on continuous and united lines. Your educational establishment is capable of supplying the needs of the whole country.⁴⁶

If anyone knew the LMS's Central Africa stations it was Laws. However, there is no record of his response to Thompson's suggestion and it can fairly be assumed that Laws did not accept the offer.⁴⁷ Was it easy for Laws to walk into a distant station and evaluate their racial prejudices without thinking of what was happening at his own station at Livingstonia? Laws had decided before even arriving on his deputation that the charges against the Hemans were not worthy of suspension. However, after clearing the Hemans of all the charges he turns and catered to the wishes of their accusers by recommending that they be reassigned. It seems a contradiction to be cleared of all charges only to then be sent home.

⁴⁶ Thompson to Laws, October 27, 1905, CWM, SOAS, Africa Outgoing Correspondence microfiche 293, row b.

⁴⁷ Jack Thompson, interviewed on 16 September 1998, has indicated that during this period the United Free Church, which sponsored the Livingstonia Mission, was cutting back on its mission expansion due to financial constraints and would probably not have allowed Laws to take on a new station even if he had wanted to.

None of the other missionaries were disciplined for making, what Laws proved were, false and unsubstantiated accusations. A year's suspension of two missionaries on the field was a serious waste of LMS funds, a loss of valuable help and experience, and a dangerous risk in the isolated context of Central Africa at that time.

It was not surprising that the Hemans planned on leaving the LMS regardless of Laws' decision concerning their case. However, by recommending an early furlough and reassignment to another field, a decision the LMS later revised to dismissal, the Hemans were in effect 'sacked' because their team-mates did not like them.

Robert Rotberg, summaries this event in his book *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia*, "The secretary of the society agreed with the deputation that dark-skinned missionaries could never be accepted on equal terms by their colleagues, and that their presence was therefore harmful to good relations between missionaries."⁴⁸ This is the same conclusion that many European-American mission boards came to during this period. As a result they tended to be more than happy to help the colonial governments keep African American missionaries out of colonial Africa.

African American Missionaries to Nyasaland

Landon Napoleon Cheek

⁴⁸ Robert I. Rotberg, *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia, 1880-1924* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 160.

In 1899, Landon Napoleon Cheek volunteered as a missionary with the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board. He departed for Nyasaland in 1901. Shortly after arriving there Cheek married Rachel Chimpere, the niece of John Chilembwe, founder and head of the Providence Industrial Mission. They had a total of five children three of whom were born in Nyasaland and two of whom were born in the USA.⁴⁹ The first child died in infancy. Cheek writes of this loss to the National Baptist Convention, “At this writing I am in deep sorrow. The Lord blessed us with such a lovely baby girl on the 21st of Sept. Just when your National meeting was closing, He saw fit to take it unto Himself after two weeks with us. My heart goes with our loved one.”⁵⁰

Cheek’s primary work at the mission was evangelism. He also worked with Chilembwe on setting up new programs and building a new church structure. His relationship with Chilembwe was very much an egalitarian one as he was sent to assist and not dominate. It was sometimes assumed that Cheek as the western missionary must have been in charge of the mission. The idea that he worked for an African or even on an equal basis with an African in 1901 was certainly an unusual relationship for that day.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The Cheeks’ five children were Ada Landon, Ella Mae, Landon Napoleon, Jr., Frank C. and Edgar Allen.

⁵⁰ Cheek letter in the *MH*, vol. 8, no. 14, November 1903, 3. Since Cheek arrived in Nyasaland in early 1901 this child born in September 1902 was probably their first born.

⁵¹ Professor George Shepperson, interviewed on 10 March 98, has indicated that the relationship between Cheek and Chilembwe was very much an egalitarian one not unlike two friends. Marrying Chilembwe’s niece Rachel, meant that Cheek and Chilembwe also had a family connection as well.

Chiradzulu, where Cheek lived, was a place where a number of tribes met. Because of this, the European settlers often referred to it as a 'hornet's nest.'⁵² He states, "Our school and church following were Yao, Angoni, and Angulu people with as many languages, two of which we mastered; and preached and taught freely among them with good results."⁵³ Cheek was in Africa for over six years and it is difficult to know how well he actually spoke these languages, but having a wife who was Yao and fluent in her mother language and probably others, must have encouraged Cheek to learn these languages himself.

In addition to the physical struggle with sickness that Cheek experienced while in Nyasaland, he was also under an almost continual financial strain. This strain was evident in a letter Cheek wrote to his mission shortly before leaving Nyasaland:

We drop you this notice to inform you that you will soon receive a draft for amount enclosed per duplicate which exceeds £50. This is the best we could do under the circumstances. This squares us up for the present. We have to make such bills to live and keep the work a going....Don't fail to get the other £60 out for our passage by Jun 07. You know our needs.⁵⁴

There is little doubt that lack of finances played a part in Cheek's decision to leave Nyasaland. Although the NBCFMB did send support to him, it never seemed to be sufficient to keep him from going into debt. In addition, there were crop failures

⁵² Shepperson, interviewed on 10 March 98, has indicated that European planters in Nyasaland, called Chiradzulu a 'hornets nest' because it was land on which a number of tribes overlapped.

⁵³ Landon Cheek, 'Reminiscences of A Missionary,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 4, September-October 1940, 11. It should be noted that Cheek wrote this article over 30 years after his departure from Nyasaland. According to the recollection of his great-granddaughter, Margaret Durham, Cheek still spoke at least one African language throughout his later life.

⁵⁴ Landon N. Cheek letter of 4 November 1906, printed in *MH*, vol. 11, no. 2, February 1907, 2.

which made life difficult for those who could not afford higher prices for food. In spite of all these difficulties, the Cheeks planned to return to Nyasaland to continue their work.⁵⁵ However, Cheek's reasons for not returning to Nyasaland were probably a mixture of financial, health, visa difficulties, and personal feeling that he might do more for that country from the USA.

Cheek was concerned about the land his mission had purchased and whether it would be taken from them or not. In a letter to his mission, he warns of the potential danger of losing the station, "You must know that our opposition as Negroes in British Territory (among our own people) is great and if these companies of English folk get a chance they will have your work."⁵⁶ Cheek was trying to get his mission to pay some bills with a local company which, if not paid promptly, might result in the legal confiscation of the mission's property. It seems that credit was freely extended to this mission, but so were threats of foreclosure if bills were not paid on time.⁵⁷

According to Cheek, some English missionaries appeared sympathetic to his situation. His letter, published in the *Mission Herald*, explains:

I am glad to say that we had a few friends in English missionaries—Mr. Driver, Mr. Phillips and Mr. Seathe. When the English blocked us in

⁵⁵ Landon N. Cheek, *MH*, vol. 13, no. 7, August 1908, 2. This article gives a report of Cheek's travels during his furlough. It was stated in this editorial on Cheek, 'Our Brother hopes to return to Africa in March 1909.' A fire in the NBCFMB Philadelphia office in 1921 destroyed much of the correspondence between Cheek and Lewis Jordan, corresponding secretary of the mission. Only early copies of the *Mission Herald* survived.

⁵⁶ Landon N. Cheek, letter published in *MH*, vol. 8, no. 10, January 1904, 1.

⁵⁷ Cheek and Delaney both struggled with financial support while in Nyasaland and both became ardent fund-raisers for the Providence Industrial Mission when they returned to the USA. The next chapter will address this in detail.

securing our land deed, etc., by misplacing our “Power of Attorney” granted us by the Foreign Mission Board, to prevent us from having a permanent foothold in the Protectorate, nothing daunted us. So we had the Board send us another and held on to it, not trusting another trick of a prejudiced consul to lose (?) it.⁵⁸

These English missionaries probably experienced the same stalling tactics used by colonial officials to misplace Cheek’s “Power of Attorney.” It should be noted here that many colonial officials did not just oppose African American missionaries, but opposed Christian missions of any kind. For this reason, many missionaries were in opposition with the colonial government and in this regard they may have sympathized with Cheek’s position. On the other hand, Cheek had cause to feel little warmth in his relationships with colonial administrators.

In 1907 Cheek, preparing to leave Nyasaland, was approached by Duncan Njilima and asked to take his sons, Matthew and Frederick Njilima, with him for education in the USA.⁵⁹ Although this was in violation of British policy at that time, Cheek agreed to try. To avoid this barrier Cheek and his party walked out of Nyasaland through neighboring Mozambique on a supposed hunting expedition. He writes in 1939 concerning this trip:

Why did we go over and through Portuguese Territory? The English had a local law prohibiting us from bringing natives out of the country. We thus

⁵⁸ Landon N. Cheek, ‘Reminiscences of A Missionary,’ vol. 44, no. 4, September-October 1940, 17.

⁵⁹ Landon N. Cheek, *MH*, vol. 43, no. 2, May-June 1939, 16. For more information on the Njilimas see the article on them by John McCracken entitled ‘Marginal Men’ in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1989) and the statement by Frederick Njilima recorded by A.S. Nbegu. It states of the Njilima’s father, ‘Duncan was a trained telegraphist and worked at Broken Hill N. Rhodesia. He has never been to South Africa. When he was at Broken Hill Duncan wrote to the Reverend Cheek asking him that when he goes to America he should take Frederick and his brother with him. Rev. Cheek accepted and the journey started sometime in 1905-1906.’ p. 1 Apparently colonial officials were not opposed to Malawians leaving to work in the mines of South Africa, as many did during this period, but they were opposed to them leaving with the intent of going for education in the USA.

outwitted them and took the overland trip directly to the coast, reaching Quilemaine[sic], taking the steamer via Beira, Durban, and Capetown, South Africa, where we had full freedom with our boys on the way....This was pioneering in an “underground railway” to break the fetters of prejudice of the English, who do not want natives to get an education in USA or mingle with Afro-Americans.⁶⁰

The “Underground Railroad” was a pre-Civil War term referring to the system of stations leading runaway slaves from the southern United States to freedom in the north and Canada. Cheek may have been exaggerating in comparing what he did in Nyasaland with the Underground Railroad, but this does not take away from the courage and daring required to attempt the escape. If he had been caught by British officials, he might have been deported, and his Yao wife and two children, not to mention the two Njilimas, might have been detained. By any measure, what Cheek did was risky. Efforts to block the reconnection between Africans and African Americans resulted in Cheek taking an underground route.⁶¹

Cheek returned to the USA from Nyasaland in 1907, after over six years in that country. His reason for leaving was to take a normal furlough. He and his wife Rachel had many difficulties during their time in Nyasaland, the greatest of which

⁶⁰ Landon N. Cheek, ‘Reminiscences of A Missionary,’ *MH*, vol. 43, no. 2, May-June 1939, 17. This was written over thirty years after Cheek left Nyasaland but it is consistent with his earlier accounts of having brought out the two young men. For a further description of Cheek’s departure see Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, p.133-142. The question raised by this action is if Cheek was leaving Nyasaland due to lack of finances then where did he get the money to bring two extra passengers to the USA? Since Duncan Njilima asked him to take his sons, he might have helped with their fares, or the NBCFMB may have reimbursed Cheek when he arrived in the USA.

⁶¹ Roderick J. MacDonald, *From Nyasaland to Malawi*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 221. Macdonald quotes J. H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council as saying, ‘My own view is that the interest of the Negro in America in the continent of his origin is a natural force which cannot be dammed up and if it is forbidden expression in healthy ways it will certainly find an outlet through underground channels.’ This seems to have been the case in terms of Cheek’s ‘Underground Railway’ from Nyasaland.

was the death of their first-born daughter. Thus the physical strain on Cheek's family was another factor that probably influenced him to return to the USA. However, probably the greatest motivation for Cheek's return was financial. He had gone to Africa committed to emigration, but returned to the USA committed to raise funds for the PIM.⁶²

Emma Beard Delaney

As the quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates, even at the age of thirteen, Emma Delaney had developed a strong desire to go to Africa as a missionary. Her university training in nursing and theology and her completion of Spelman College's missionary training program meant that she was a highly educated thirty year old missionary when she finally departed the USA on January 15, 1902 for Nyasaland.

Her first experience upon presenting herself for entry into Africa was to be indicative of the situation there. She writes of it in a letter home, "The agent gave me an order to three different places. I tried them and received the same answer from each, 'We are crowded out.' I soon saw this was a polite way of turning a Negro away. Let me say that there is as much prejudice in some places in Africa as in America."⁶³ To experience racial prejudice in colonial Africa was a common experience for these missionaries.⁶⁴

⁶² Cheeks emigration plans will be evaluated in the section on emigration in Chapter 4.

Delaney was remembered by Daniel S. Malekebu, head of the Providence Industrial Mission in Nyasaland, in this way:

At the mission, Miss DeLaney supervised the making of bricks, dried and burned them. For the first time in history women and girls, even boys learned domestic arts. The beginning of a new day in this part of Africa....Miss DeLaney's teaching of girls and women in the Protectorate proved, and showed the possibility that women and girls could be trained to become teachers as well as men.⁶⁵

Though, Malekebu probably wrote this tribute to Delaney years after she left Nyasaland it is significant that he remembers her educational programs from the early 1900s.

While a young boy, Malekebu served as Delaney's house servant. He was also her first baptismal candidate and she gave him her father's name, Daniel Sharpe Delaney, at his baptism.⁶⁶ He later followed her to the USA where she helped him obtain his education including a medical degree at Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee.⁶⁷

According to Willie Mae Ashley, Delaney's biographer, John Chilembwe named one of his children Emma in memory of Delaney.⁶⁸ Although she never

⁶³ Emma Delaney *Mission Herald*, (hereafter cited as *MH*) July 1902, 1. For further information on Delaney see Sandy D. Martin's article on Delaney in *Journal of Religious Thought*, vol. 41, Spring-Summer 84, 22-37.

⁶⁴ This issue of racial prejudice will be further addressed in chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Daniel S. Malekebu, 'Miss Emma Bertha DeLaney and Mission Work in Africa' n.d., n.p. located in the George Shepperson papers, Edinburgh University Library (hereafter cited as EUL) Special Collections. Shepperson's papers are of value to anyone studying Central African history. Malekebu goes on to say of Delaney's later ministry in Liberia, 'The people lovingly remembered her and called her that she was 'one woman, plus three men.' Because she was a very hard working person.'

⁶⁶ Ashley, *Far From Home*, 9.

⁶⁷ Malekebu will be discussed further in chapter 6.

legally adopted Malekebu, she did all that a mother could do to help him. It is evident that the affinity Delaney felt for the people of Nyasaland went far beyond her work on the mission field and was reciprocated by the people there.

Delaney wrote fondly of a visit from Seventh-day Adventist missionary Mabel Branch, “Miss Branch of the Cholo Mission has been over spending the holiday and has done much to cheer me and make me forget my worry and troubles.”⁶⁹ Delaney’s co-worker, Cheek, also enjoyed a visit to the Seventh-day Adventists mission. He states, “I have just spent a pleasant week with the Seventh Day Adventists (colored) at Cholo, some forty miles from us. I was fortunate enough to meet their secretary, who has spent a month with them.”⁷⁰ It would appear that both Delaney and Cheek enjoyed their contact with the Branches.

Survival on the mission field was more important to these missionaries than maintaining denominational separation. Having fellowship with other missionaries of different beliefs, did not necessarily mean they surrendered their own theological positions. But it is clear that they knew the value of emotional encouragement to their survival in Africa and they sought to give this to one another regardless of their differing theological views.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 6. The practice among Africans of naming their children after missionaries was a common practice especially since the missionaries generally had ‘Christian’ names. This, along with other evidence, shows that Delaney, who Malekebu referred to in later life as Mother Delaney, was regarded as a friend which is an honor not all missionaries were given.

⁶⁹ Delaney letter published in the *MH*, vol. 8, no. 4, March 1904, 15.

⁷⁰ Cheek letter published in the *MH*, vol. 9, no. 4, November 1904, 5.

⁷¹ Most European missionaries of this period saw the importance of social interaction to their survival on the field, but they often made an exception when it came to social contact with Africans or African American. This became more strictly applied as more wives of missionaries accompanied their husbands on the field.

Delaney departed Nyasaland in 1906 with the intent of returning following her furlough. According to a report in a 1907 issue of *Mission Herald* magazine, she was in very poor health when she arrived in the USA. The report stated, “Miss Delaney...is now in America and may be crippled for life, because of climatic conditions causing a disease to settle in her joints. In spite of her crippled condition, she has evinced a great love for Africa and her long wronged millions, traveling over this country when she ought to have been in bed.”⁷² Delaney experienced financial strain while in Nyasaland and was determined to raise funds while in the USA and maybe even find another mission to serve with. However, for reasons that can only be speculated she ended up going to Liberia in 1912 with the NBCFMB where she founded the Suehn (pronounced ‘soon’) Industrial Mission.⁷³

Thomas and Henrietta Branch

The Seventh-day Adventists mission began in Africa simultaneously in Egypt and South Africa. SDA historian Baldur Pfeiffer states, “Contacts between the church in America and settlers in Kimberly, South Africa, can be dated back as far as 1886, though the beginnings of Sabbath-keeping go back a few more years.”⁷⁴ In

⁷² *MH* report on mission work, vol. 11, no. 2, February 1907, 2.

⁷³ William J. Harvey III, *Bridges of Faith Across the Seas* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., 1989), 55. This book is a history of this mission and includes information about Delaney, Cheek and Chilembwe all of whom were missionaries with the board.

⁷⁴ Baldur E. Pfeiffer, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Contributions to East Africa, 1903-1983*, (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985), 13.

1902 Thomas Branch and his family were sent to a Seventh-day Adventist station in Malamulo, Nyasaland, founded by Englishman, Joseph Booth. Branch left a pastoral ministry in Pueblo, Colorado, with his wife and three children, to live in Thyolo district for over five years. There they were involved in a ministry that included church planting, as well as running a dairy farm and a school. Branch states in a letter to his mission in 1904:

I believe that it is the providence of God that has sent us to them. They have a knowledge of their forefathers having been carried away long, long ago; and appreciate that we, of their own kindred, have returned to them with the knowledge of the true God, to teach them the better way to live, and to lead them to Christ.⁷⁵

When the Branches and the Booths arrived in Africa at the port of Chinde, Mozambique at the mouth of the Zambesi, Branch wrote this, "...we were detained nine days by the British consul because we were educated Afro-American missionaries. Brother Booth remained three days with us, working zealously to get the detention removed, but without success.... At the expiration of nine days we were permitted to proceed up the river."⁷⁶ After this delay it took another two weeks to reach their station.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Thomas Branch, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter cited as *ARSH*), 11 February 1904, 16. Although Branch implies that slavery was a distant memory occurring many years previously, its presence in Nyasaland was only a few years prior to his arrival. Thus the loss of relatives taken by slavers was probably much fresher in the minds of these people than in Branch's mind.

⁷⁶ Mrs. Henrietta Branch letter in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, (hereafter cited as *ARSH*) November 18, 1902, 17.

⁷⁷ Although being detained by custom officials was not exactly a cultural adjustment it is important to show the hesitancy of the colonial government to allow African Americans to develop cultural connections with East Africans. Anyone entering a foreign country for the first time only to be questioned by a stern custom agent knows how this first impression can hinder ones' adjustment to a new country.

Mabel Branch, the daughter of Thomas and Henrietta Branch, states that it was the children who were the focus of her education work:

Many of the village children attend our school, and also Sabbath services, and listen attentively to all that is said. In these children lies our hope of getting this message taught to others. The older people do not like to change their customs, but many of the young ones do not like the village life, so come to the mission to be taught.⁷⁸

During the period that the Branches were in Nyasaland a lack of converts was not always a sign of lack of effort on the part of missionaries. Henrietta Branch states in a letter to her mission, “The native is not very quickly converted to the Word of God. He is a creature of long investigations.”⁷⁹ For many of these early missions many months and often years of effort were expended with little results in terms of converts. In most cases the affinity between these missionaries and the indigenous people came before the conversions did.

The Branches also enjoyed visits with Cheek and Delaney at the nearby Chiradzulu station. Thomas Branch writes about one of these visits:

A short time ago I visited a colored Baptist station forty miles from here. They are doing a good work. They have two American workers—a lady and a gentleman—and a native young man who was educated in America. The young lady has charge of the women’s work, and is building a dormitory for girls. But notwithstanding all these advantages, many of the natives come to us, and ask to be taught here, because of the Sabbath.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Mabel Branch, letter published in *ARSH*, 6 April 1905, 13.

⁷⁹ Henrietta Branch, letter published in *ARSH*, 3 August, 1905, 17. See also William Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo*, (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, [1910]), 149. Sheppard states, ‘From the time Mr. Lapsley and I landed in the Congo, five years elapsed before there was a convert.’

⁸⁰ Thomas Branch, *ARSH*, March 3, 1904, 18.

The Branches decided to take their furlough in South Africa in 1907 and then planned to return to Nyasaland. It can only be speculated as to why they did this. They might have been concerned about the potential difficulties they might have encountered in re-entering Nyasaland as African American missionaries if they had departed Africa, particularly in light of the Zulu uprising in Natal in 1906, which was associated with Ethiopianism and African Americans. They may have remembered how they were detained at Chinde by custom agents when they first arrived in Africa. However, due to the poor health of his wife, Branch decided to return to their home in Colorado rather than return to Nyasaland.⁸¹

The YMCA workers in Kenya and Tanzania and its consequences in the early 1920s

The YMCA was founded in London in 1844 by George Williams. The first African American YMCA branch was founded in Washington, D.C. in 1854. This separate department within the YMCA was founded within the USA branch in keeping with this organization's policy of 'separate but equal' at that time. Jesse Moorland, a Presbyterian minister and board member of Howard University, headed up this department during WWI. The YMCA's identifying symbol, the red triangle, represents a balance between the spiritual, mental and physical sides of life.

⁸¹ Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Committee Minutes, 24 September 1907, SDA archive. It states, 'Nyasaland: The correspondence showed that later there developed the suggestion that possibly Brother Branch's family would feel unable to return from the Cape, where they have been taking a furlough.' Branch was quoted earlier in this research as saying, 'My wife's health has failed, but she keeps on, trying to keep up her part of the work. Mabel and the boys are very well. I think that my health was never better since coming to Africa.' *ARSH*, 3 January 1907, 18.

Although its current image identifies it more as a social recreational organization it began with groups for prayer and Bible study.⁸²

During World War I a request was made to the YMCA for African American secretaries to assist with the needs of the African troops and carriers of the East African Expeditionary Force. These secretaries served in Dar es Salaam, Mombasa, Nairobi and various other locations that the allied troops occupied in East Africa. It was almost certainly due to the unusual circumstances brought about by the war that seven African American YMCA secretaries were allowed to enter East Africa.

These YMCA secretaries had a most difficult time communicating with the Africans because of the tribal diversity of the troops and carriers they worked with. Frederick Ballou wrote to Jesse Moorland, from Nairobi, Kenya: "Here in this clever spot in the midst of representatives of fourteen different tribal folk daily preparing in the art of war was located the YMCA." Ballou was responsible for serving the King's African Rifles depot near Nairobi and as he indicates in this letter this unit was culturally and linguistically diverse.

Each YMCA secretary had to make cultural adjustments upon arriving in Africa. Max Yergan spent two months in India before arriving in Africa. Others like YMCA secretaries Lloyd and Stanley, spent a few weeks in South Africa before sailing up the coast to East Africa. Delays occurred at customs and because of

⁸² Franklin H. Littell, *The Macmillan Atlas History of Christianity*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1976), 148. 'Furthermore, the 'Y' though open to associate membership of non-Christians - proclaimed its commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in it first international assembly.'

mission board directions as well as because travel anywhere in East Africa in the early twentieth century was apt to have its unexpected delays.

Due to the climactic conditions in East Africa during WWI, European troops found it difficult to survive, according to C.R. Webster, the head of the YMCA in East Africa. Webster writes, "During 1916 the British learned by bitter experience that white men could not endure the hardships of campaigning in this climate, and the Allied Army now is almost entirely a black one."⁸³ African troops and carriers were also devastated as disease and sickness probably killed more people than bullets.⁸⁴ Reinforcements for these troops tended to be from various indigenous populations under colonial control throughout Africa and the Caribbean.⁸⁵ J. Forbes Munro describes the Kamba (in Kenya) view of the Carrier Corps:

Initially, during 1915-1916, Kamba youth responded readily to the district commissioner's appeal to their military norms and enlisted voluntarily in large numbers as carriers. But as the campaigns dragged on, and young men returned home to describe conditions at the front - heavy loads, bad or insufficient food, lack of water, lice, and dysentery - a reluctance to serve grew and the administration increasingly fell back on coercive methods.⁸⁶

⁸³ C.R. Webster, 'Annual YMCA Report for the Year Ending September 30, 1917', YMCA WWI files, YMCA archive, University of Minnesota, St Paul (hereafter cited as YMCA).

⁸⁴ Quote by Max Yergan, 'Diseases are as destructive of life and perhaps at present, more so than bullets.' Yergan to Moorland, 19 December 1916, 8, Moorland YMCA War files, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (hereafter cited as MSRC).

⁸⁵ Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, 233,234. The departure of men for war concerned Chilembwe, leader of the Nyasaland uprising, because the widows and orphans of these men were left without care by the colonial government.

⁸⁶ J. Forbes Munro, *Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands, 1889-1939*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 90.

Nonetheless the Carrier Corps brought people from many different tribes together for the first time and many languages were spoken and cultures shared among the troops and carriers. Some have said that the early seeds of Pan-Africanism were sown through the contacts made during WWI.⁸⁷ As YMCA secretary, Thomas Lloyd, said of his location at Dar es Salaam, “I tried to learn enough of every tribe’s language at least to give him the time of day. I found that each tribe hailed me as a member of his tribe.”⁸⁸ Lloyd goes on to describe his arrival in East Africa, “I landed in Dar es Salaam April 5, 1917, and was carried through a month of rigorous training by Mr. Max Yergan. After which I was assigned to the native corps in Dar es Salaam. These Corps consisted of East African Carriers, South African mule drivers, gun carriers, and the native Medical Corps.”⁸⁹ From the very beginning of their time in Africa, these secretaries were in contact with a multitude of tribal groups drawn together by the war. This forced them to go beyond what was normally expected of a missionary in the area of language learning. It is hard to say how well these secretaries actually knew these languages, but it is clear that they saw learning multiple languages as an important part of their work.

Yergan writes that the linguistic diversity among the troops and carriers in his camp was not great enough to keep them from praying together. He describes an end

⁸⁷ See quote by J. Langley in chapter 4 footnote 109.

⁸⁸ Report from Lloyd to Moorland on the work in East Africa, n.d., Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. Major C.R. Webster head of the YMCA in East Africa wrote concerning one of these secretaries in his ‘Annual Report for the year ending Sept. 30, 1917,’ p.3, WWI files, YMCA archives, that, ‘One of them gained a knowledge of the Swahili language within six months which enabled him to give a religious address to the natives in their own tongue.’

⁸⁹Ibid.

of day prayer meeting in this way: “Then upon a tap of the bell they stop at once.

Down upon our knees we go to thank God for the day. There are usually five tribes, so a man from each tribe prays in his dialect.”⁹⁰ Yergan was able to understand some of the depth of sincerity of these prayers because he had learned some of the languages they spoke. He described one meeting in this way:

I recall, when I was up in the hills, the prayers that these men uttered. I knew one of the languages well enough to talk with them, and could understand one or two others well enough to get their drift. The midweek prayer service was held in a grass hut. They thanked God for the stars that would light their way home; for the path they would use; for the sleep that would come to them; for the blankets they would wrap themselves in—simple, lifelike prayers—and I have asked myself if God is as real to me as He is to them.⁹¹

Yergan’s proficiency in language learning was even more significant in light of the fact that he only lived in East Africa for two years.

Not only was language learning important to these YMCA secretaries, but so was cultural understanding. YMCA secretary Fred Ballou wrote of his experience in working with the carriers in his camp near Nairobi, “The nature of the native is such that anyone can easily learn to fairly love him. So I am not at all reluctant to say I am highly enjoying the rapidly passing days here on this continent.”⁹² There may be some question concerning how much of the actual situation this letter shares. Ballou may have sought to share only the positive side of his experience to encourage others to come to Africa. This would not be inconsistent with many missionary letters

⁹⁰ Yergan to Moorland, 18 September 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

⁹¹ Document entitled ‘Max Yergan,’ September 1921, p.6, Yergan files, YMCA. Portions were used to for an article in the YMCA magazine *All One*, vol. 1, no. 3, 30 November 1921, 2.

⁹² F.D. Ballou to C.V. Hibbard of the International YMCA office, 16 September 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

written to mission boards. However, other letters support Ballou's positive statement that these YMCA secretaries were pleased to serve among the African troops and carriers and found their adjustment to the cultural environment smooth.

Another example of this was Thomas Lloyd who wrote to Moorland, his YMCA director:

I started this work May 15, 1918 as house master, which work gave me an opportunity to be a big brother to nearly one hundred boys. I loved all of these boys; and in return for my love they gave me the highest respect and affection. I taught them the 3 Rs which kept me in the class room from nine to twelve and two to four each day.⁹³

In addition, Lloyd taught his pupils at the Railway Training School in Dar es Salaam that there was no shame in working with their hands, an important aspect of industrial education at Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes. Lloyd states, "At first the boys thought it was against their caste to work; but I changed that sentiment by showing them I could use a pick and shovel without breaking my caste."⁹⁴ The feelings of affinity these missionaries had with the Africans might be compared with Livingstone's attitude of seeing the 'point of view of the native.' As Lloyd states after having to discipline his students over a stolen goat, "Notwithstanding their short

⁹³Report from Lloyd to Moorland on YMCA work in British East Africa, n.d., Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

⁹⁴ Ibid. It should be noted that Booker T. Washington reported a very similar event at Tuskegee in his book *Up From Slavery* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1900 reissued in 1928), 131. Washington states, 'When I explained my plan to the young men, I noticed that they did not seem to take to it very kindly. It was hard for them to see the connection between clearing land and an education....In order to relieve them from any embarrassment, each afternoon after school I took my axe and led the way to the woods. When they saw that I was not afraid or ashamed to work, they began to assist with more enthusiasm.'

comings, I love these boys immensely and listen to their stories of their many difficulties and try to help them out of them all.”⁹⁵

A significant aspect of the YMCA work during the war in East Africa was the training of indigenous leadership. Yergan states, “In Dar es Salaam and vicinity we have six branches going. We have been successful in enlisting some splendid indigenous assistants from the mission stations—To my mind this is one of our bright spots.”⁹⁶ This goal was always in the minds of these missionaries as was the case with many European missionaries. E.C. Carter of the YMCA states it this way, “Of course the whole aim back of our efforts in this direction is eventually to supplant American Negro Secretaries with African Secretaries. I think you probably realize that the aim of all of our efforts in this direction is to help build up a really indigenous, strong, useful African Young Men’s Christian Association.”⁹⁷

The major difference between these missionaries and European ones was that the length of time African American missionaries thought necessary to prepare Africans for leadership was much shorter. Part of the reason for this was that generally, unlike the European missionaries, they did not think it was necessary for the African to meet western standards before he was qualified for leadership. As YMCA secretary Walter Stanley says of his work: “I am in charge of three canteens, located in three, different camps, which serve natives. They do all the work. I give

⁹⁵ Lloyd to Moorland, 1 September 1918, Moorland YMCA War Work files, MSRC. Lloyd was in charge of a group of students at the Railway Training School in Dar es Salaam.

⁹⁶ Yergan to Moorland, 18 September 1917, Moorland YMCA War Work files, MSRC.

⁹⁷ E.C. Carter to Oswin Bull in South Africa, 26 July 1921, East Africa War work files, YMCA.

cinemas every week and teach natives their language. What a presumption!”⁹⁸ In the last line Stanley realized that what he was trying to do was overstepping the bounds of his own ability. A humility not regularly found among missionaries of this period.

Not all European missionaries of this period agreed that it should take a century to train African leaders. Among the more noteworthy was Roland Allen, a missionary with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in China until 1905 and then an independent missionary to Africa. He questioned many of the accepted missionary methods of his day. He states in his book *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, (1927), “Christ trained leaders in two or three years; these have been training leaders for more than two or three generations.”⁹⁹ Allen goes on to write:

Foreigners can never successfully direct the propagation of any faith throughout a whole country. If the faith does not become naturalized and expand among the people by its own vital power, it exercises an alarming and hateful influence, and men fear and shun it as something alien. It is then obvious that no sound missionary policy can be based upon the multiplication of missionaries and mission stations.¹⁰⁰

Allen’s views were similar to those of the early Church Missionary Society secretary, Henry Venn, who wrote in 1854:

⁹⁸ Walter P. Stanley, ‘R.A. Pritchett ‘17, Dies in Africa Trying to Save Companion,’ in *Lincoln University Herald*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1919, 9.

⁹⁹ Roland Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927), 28. Contrasted with Allen’s view is this view by the colonial governor of Uganda in 1959, Andrew Cohen, *British Policy in Changing Africa*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 27. Cohen, governor of Uganda in the late 1950s, states, “The objective of self-government was, of course generally accepted during this period by those concerned with the African territories; but by most individuals it was regarded as something for the pretty remote future which did not affect immediate policies and plans....it was the assumption that we had indefinite time that led to these things being left until a later period.” Cohen and many other British colonial officials were simply unprepared for the swift transition to independence that many African nations experienced following WWII.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

A tendency exists in every Mission to occupy the time and labours of the Missionary in the home duties of schools and pastoral ministrations, and even when two or more Missionaries are united in the same field of labour, these home duties are still the chief object of attention, each sharing in them to the hindrance or neglect of direct missionary work. The best remedy for the tendency here described, is to be found in the preparation of a NATIVE MINISTRY capable of understanding the pastoral charge of Native Christian flocks, under the general superintendence of the Missionaries, whose time and strength will be proportionately released for direct work of a Mission—the evangelization of the Heathen.¹⁰¹

Both Allen and Venn believed that a relatively short period of time was necessary to accomplish the goal of self-government. It is not clear exactly how long Venn thought this ought to take, but it was certainly a shorter time than was practiced by most European missions of the early 20th century. Most missionaries would have agreed with Venn that self-government needed to occur, but they would have disagreed on the timing. Some may have thought that one hundred years was too soon and others, like Rufus Anderson Venn's American Congregationalist counterpart, would have agreed with Venn in suggesting a very short period.

Anderson wrote in 1870:

It appears to have been a settled point with him [Paul], that a church once fairly planted and organized, with a proper arrangement for the pastoral care, might be safely left to itself, under the supervising grace of God. This, as will readily be seen, is a point of vital importance in the missionary work. Had not the apostolic idea of self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating

¹⁰¹ Henry Venn, 'The Establishment of a Native Church,' reprinted in *To Apply The Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn*, ed. Max Warren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 62. Emphasis in this quote is Venn's. He goes on to define the 'euthanasia of a mission' in the following manner, 'It is important ever to keep in view what has been happily termed, 'the Euthanasia of a Mission,' where the Missionary is surrounded by well-trained Native congregations under Native Pastors, when he gradually and wisely abridges his own labours, and relapses his superintendence over the Pastors till they are able to sustain their own Christian ordinances.' p. 63. Venn states further, 'The whole organization is founded upon the three principles—self-supporting, self-government, and self-extension.' p. 75.

churches dropped out of the Christian mind so soon after the age of the apostles, not to be fully regained until modern times.¹⁰²

By the turn of the twentieth century the philosophy of missions had changed radically from that of Venn and Anderson to one of ‘gradual’ education and westernization. Allen’s books were, in part, a reaction to this shift. Although there is little evidence that African American missionaries read books by Allen, Venn or Anderson, it is clear that they applied the principles of “self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating” in a much shorter period of time than most European missionaries would have been comfortable with. This is one of the reasons why the issue of supervision of African and African American missionaries was seen as being so crucial by white missions.¹⁰³ African American missionaries believed the indigenous people were capable of effectively leading their own people in worship and with proper education, they could be successful, as in the case of John Chilembwe, in taking charge of their own missions immediately or in a short period of time. Therefore, it was the education of Africans that they devoted themselves to as missionaries.

Yergan states of his education work:

If you could visit some of the night schools we have established there and see those hundreds of men, after, ten, twelve or fifteen hours of hard toil under the burning African sun, willing to pore over a slate or scribble in the sand in order to learn to write their names, or the alphabet, or one or two words in English, you would get some further idea as to the magnitude of the challenge

¹⁰² Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1870), 49.

¹⁰³ Chapter 5 on the International Missionary Council conference at Le Zoute in 1926 will address this issue of supervision in greater detail.

for men to serve with these thousands upon thousands of men out in Africa.¹⁰⁴

Simons wrote in his diary about the hunger for education among the carriers he worked, “These boys are positively the keenest set of school boys I have known. They actually had to be driven out of the school room at six p.m.”¹⁰⁵ He goes on to comment, “Never have I seen any[thing] like their eagerness to learn. They literally stormed my tent tonight and worked like men on the simple examples and copy I gave them.”¹⁰⁶

Ballou, a co-worker of Yergan and Simons, trained a young African to preach to the carriers on Sunday rather than deliver the sermons himself. “Each Sunday services were held, conducted by a Kikuyu mission boy, the interpreter. Through thoughts and suggestions from me through the week, he was able to arrange a sermon and conduct the services quite neatly on the Sabbath Day.”¹⁰⁷

However smooth their adjustments might have been, they also had their share of difficulties. Foremost in their adjustment was the issue of health. Yergan wrote shortly after arriving in Africa:

I am glad to say that I am about recovered from fever. I have been taking from twenty to thirty grains of quinine a day. This has rendered me nearly deaf so I must stop it. Of course it takes a long time to become acclimated;

¹⁰⁴ Max Yergan, ‘A YMCA Secretary in Africa’ in *Southern Workman*, vol. 47, August 1918, 403.

¹⁰⁵ Simons, diary, 28 May 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹⁰⁶ Simons, diary, 16 September 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC. The phrase ‘and worked like men’ in this context seems to imply that their work was diligent and not necessarily that they were not men.

¹⁰⁷ F.D. Ballou to Moorland, 14 February 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

food, water and above all the terrible heat causing it. I haven't drunk a drop of water for two months. Tea is all one takes out here.¹⁰⁸

Ballou states, "I had fever while in Dar es Salaam—everybody gets it there so I had to have my share, of course. But I am now in a healthful region, some 5000 ft above sea level, and about 500 miles inland. Africa's fresh breezes are delightful here."¹⁰⁹ Many of the health difficulties they faced seemed to stem from living in areas where the climate was difficult for almost anyone. Walter Stanley, YMCA secretary, said of Dar es Salaam, "The weather here reaches 124 degrees during the day and cold enough for two blankets at night....Think of me in your prayers, so that I may endure hardships like a good soldier of Jesus Christ."¹¹⁰

Simons wrote in his diary of health difficulties he faced a few months after arriving in Africa, "Scared stiff by description of Blackwater till I noted that excessive vomiting was included. I have other symptoms but not that."¹¹¹ In a later entry in his diary Simons wrote, "Some day I suppose I shall be ashamed of the feelings I have tonight but just now they seem perfectly justified. I feel like a big baby!"¹¹² In spite of his own illness, it did not take Simons long to realize that others were suffering far more than he was. He wrote the next day in his diary, "Thought

¹⁰⁸ Yergan in Dar es Salaam to Moorland, 26 November 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

¹⁰⁹ F.D. Ballou to C.V. Hibbard of the International YMCA office, 16 September 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. This is the first example of an African American missionary being sent to a healthy area such as the Kenya Highlands.

¹¹⁰ Walter P. Stanley letter published in *Lincoln University Herald*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1919, 10. Stanley was an alumnus of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.

¹¹¹ Simons, diary, 31 August 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹¹² Simons, diary, 9 September 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

myself the sickest person in camp but a visit to the Dr.'s booth this A.M. quickly dispelled that."¹¹³ Ironically, Simons' obituary states the cause of his death in 1938, while serving as a Southern Baptist missionary in Nigeria, was "haemoglobinuria, secondary to chronic malaria"¹¹⁴ which is the medical term for blackwater fever.¹¹⁵ This shows again that contrary to popular belief of that time, pigmentation did not give these missionaries immunity to disease.¹¹⁶

The psychological and emotional impact of sickness were factors most people who lived in Africa had to deal with. Edward Blyden, Liberian scholar of the late 1800s, wrote in his book *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, concerning the effects of sickness on newcomers to Africa:

There is no possibility of entering Africa, either from the east or west, without passing through a belt of malarious country by which the strongest constitutions are affected....They become the prey of melancholy in its literal, etymological sense, and in this abnormal state of mental impressibility they take the most gloomy views of the people, and reproduce their own preconceived or favorite types of the African.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Simons, diary, 10 September 1918, box 1, William Simons Papers, LOC.

¹¹⁴ Simons, obituary, box 5, William Simons Papers, LOC.

¹¹⁵ The *Oxford Dictionary* defines blackwater fever as, "a severe form of malaria in which blood cells are rapidly destroyed, resulting in dark urine."

¹¹⁶ William E. Phipps, *Sheppards and Lapsley* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church of the US, 1991), 23. Phipps states, 'During the next two years Sheppard kept a record of twenty-two bouts of malaria. This shows the incorrectness of the assumption held by some that Afro-Americans were immune to tropical diseases.'

¹¹⁷ Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967, reprinted from 1887), 263. Blyden quotes Livingstone as saying, 'The irritability produced by disease made me pigheaded' and Dr. Johnson, 'Every man is a rascal as soon as he is sick.' p. 263

Unfortunately, many people took this negative impression of Africa home with them, not realizing it was more due to their sickness than to reality.

Repeatedly, these secretaries' writings mentioned the impact that disease and sickness had, not only on themselves, but also on the people they served. Yergan wrote to Moorland about his work with troops in Africa:

As they tramped down from that part of Africa to the coast, each man was given a handful of rice per day. Some fell out, as we marched down to the coast, with no complaint, simply accepting it as their lot—burning up with fever, dying from wounds they had received in battle, simply passing away with no complaint whatever. These are the qualities which must mean something in the life of the people whom we call heathen.¹¹⁸

Simons writes in his diary about the severe conditions in some of the hospitals: “Agonizing suffering in hospitals. Deaths sometimes 40 per day, 10,000 per week in whole town recently.”¹¹⁹ If this quote is only partially true, it is still hard to imagine the suffering that the African soldiers and civilians endured. World War I may have been a European war of politics and power, but it was a world war of suffering. As Simons' quote indicates, the suffering among East Africans did not go unnoticed by these missionaries.

In addition to health adjustments were the requirements of the job. Physical stamina, flexibility, and the ability to work with different types of people required a diversity of skills. Yergan wrote only a few weeks after arriving in East Africa:

I am now at the front, ‘somewhere’ in German East Africa. Am keeping on the go for I must be at all times with my men. I was just this morning thinking about the different roles I fill with them—chaplain, undertaker, moving picture operator, Red Cross nurse, director of athletics, etc. I believe

¹¹⁸ Max Yergan, ‘A YMCA Secretary in Africa,’ in *Southern Workman*, vol. 47, August 1918, 402.

¹¹⁹ Simons, diary, 25 May 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

are the more outstanding claims upon my time. One needs strength during these days.¹²⁰

As Nina Mjagkij states in her history of the African American YMCA, “Although the YMCA required church membership of its secretaries, religious passion was less important for success than diplomatic skills. A YMCA secretary had to have the ability to work with a diverse group of people...”¹²¹ This philosophy was tested by those working among the Carrier Corps in East Africa. The stress of their job was multiplied by being in a war zone as Yergan states, “Stray bullets have pierced our tent in half a dozen places.”¹²²

In addition the secretaries were continually on the move with the troops. In the twenty months YMCA secretary Lloyd was in Africa, he moved three times. Lloyd states, “I worked in East Africa from April 5, 1917 to December 21, 1918. During that period I worked at the following points: Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, both in German East and Port Amelia, Portuguese East Africa.”¹²³

Although suffering and the other harsh realities of war made mission work more difficult, these secretaries still saw it as necessary. Yergan states: “Where Christianity is conspicuous by its absence, one has clear convictions of the need of it.

¹²⁰Yergan to Moorland, 19 December 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

¹²¹ Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 56.

¹²²Yergan to Moorland, 19 December 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

¹²³Report from Lloyd to Moorland on Work in East Africa, n.d., Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

Be not deceived, war robs the best of men of that which during normal times they feel they are sure of. It pulls off the veneer and exposes the black souls of men.”¹²⁴

Yergan graphically describes the hope he felt in spite of the difficult conditions he worked under:

One soon becomes accustomed to the stench of decayed bodies. Yes, one must handle half rotten human bodies. The sight of it will be with me forever....And yet, out of all this there are occasions when one finds out that the big thing in life is not dead in the hearts of men. Last Sunday I saw big men who had just returned from killing other men, weep when during the course of my talk they took the opportunity to reflect.¹²⁵

Yergan lamented about his condition, but quickly states that he was ready to pay whatever price for the work he was doing. He wrote: “If I get out with even the possibility of getting back to my normal self, I shall be more than happy. Yet our Master’s will be done.”¹²⁶

Due to the racially discriminatory attitudes present in colonial Africa, African American missionaries often found themselves socially isolated even from their fellow missionaries. In addition, though they enjoyed a degree of affinity with the Africans, even here they were culturally isolated to some degree because they could not relate to every cultural practice they encountered. They, therefore, recognized the importance of their relationships with one another and sought to encourage each

¹²⁴Yergan to Moorland, 26 November 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

¹²⁵Yergan to Moorland, 19 December 1916, Moorland YMCA War Files, MSRC.

¹²⁶ Yergan to Moorland, 11 June 1917, p. 4, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. Yergan states on page 3 of this letter, ‘I am sleeping on a little grass spread over the mud. By the mud bespattered condition of myself in the morning, I know my friends, the rats, have been using me as a sort of race course.’ Knowing how difficult the conditions were for Yergan it is significant that he still maintained a sense of humor about his situation. He lived to be 82 years old.

other. YMCA secretary A.C. Richey writes of his colleagues, “Yergan, Lloyd and Ballou have done some fine work since coming out. I shall feel that my labor has not been in vain if I succeed in measuring up to the high standards set by them.”¹²⁷

Another secretary, R.A. Pritchett, wrote to Moorland about Yergan: “I don’t think it’s possible for us to estimate the great work that Max did as the Pioneer and I trust that he shall be completely restored to health.”¹²⁸ Yergan writes of his co-workers:

Perhaps the first item I should take up should be the arrival of Richey and Pritchett. They are here and have brought a mighty fine spirit with them....I like Pritchett very much. He is solid and thoroughly consecrated and I’m sure will make good when paired with Lloyd. Our outlook here in Dar es Salaam is particularly bright....In a few days I shall take Richey to a western point where we shall begin activities. Being just out of college, he has a little experience to gain.¹²⁹

Generally, Yergan’s evaluations of his co-workers were positive. However, he did have a negative critique of Ballou on one occasion. He wrote to Moorland:

In a previous letter I mentioned the work of Lloyd and Ballou. We have every reason to feel proud of Lloyd’s work. He has thrown himself into it with the spirit that wins and is getting results. Unfortunately, Ballou’s personality, particularly his thoughts of self, prevents him from rendering the best service. On the other hand, however, he seems to possess ability and it may be that he will come around in time.¹³⁰

Simons writes of seeing the graves of Ballou and Pritchett his co-workers who drowned in a swimming accident in 1918:

At last my unwilling mind accepts the fact that Ballou and Pritchett are dead. I visited the little cemetery which we used to pass so often and used to ridicule because it is divided into sections—one for ‘Catholics, one for

¹²⁷ A.C. Richey to Moorland, 2 October 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

¹²⁸ R.A. Pritchett to Moorland, 21 August 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

¹²⁹ Yergan to Moorland, 18 September 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

¹³⁰ Yergan to Moorland, 30 July 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC

Presbyterians and non-conformists, and one for the Church of England.’ The boys are in the second section at the back.¹³¹

The shocking news of the untimely death of these two co-workers was probably the single most difficult event that these secretaries experienced in Africa. Stanley, one of the seven YMCA secretaries, was a classmate at Lincoln University of Pritchett. He was convalescing in Dar es Salaam from an attack of fever when the news reached him. His report of Pritchett’s death was published in his school newspaper:

He [Pritchett] died trying to save F.D. Ballou, a fellow worker. On the fatal afternoon, September 21, 1918....Lloyd and Ballou and Pritchett had been swimming, teaching Ballou....Lloyd then attempted to bring the pair to shore, a physical impossibility, for which he also nearly paid by being drowned....The sight of Pritchett with face buried in sand, Ballou still clutching his arms, still on his back, will perhaps never be erased from my memory....Natural death is startlingly painful and impressive, but unnatural death is soul gripping and terrifying. But we enlisted for such battles, and the God of Battles will not test us beyond our strength. As I write, I am unashamed as tears fill my eyes.¹³²

The official report of the funeral of Pritchett and Ballou is as follows:

The funeral of the two American coloured secretaries drowned on 21st Sept., was held on Sunday afternoon, 22nd Sept., with military honours. All of the fellow-secretaries, two chaplains, two motor drivers from the ASC, and a native Christian teacher formed the pall bearers to the bodies of R.A. Pritchett and F.D. Ballou. Each was draped in the American flag....The military inquest which inquired into the circumstance of their death reports, “that there was no doubt that Mr. Pritchett had died in a very gallant attempt to save his comrade.” Messrs. Lloyd, Pritchett, and Ballou were bathing together at high tide when the latter who could not swim, was carried on his feet into deep water. Mr. Lloyd was with difficulty rescued by the throwing of a long rope after he had exhausted himself in an effort to help his two friends. The deaths had a greater sadness as the two secretaries were awaiting a boat to India on their way back to the States.¹³³

¹³¹ Simons, diary, 17 February 1919, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹³² Walter P. Stanley, ‘R.A. Pritchett ‘17 Dies in Africa Trying to Save Companion,’ in *Lincoln University Herald*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1919, 8.

¹³³ Report from Vernon Nash, ‘Army YMCA in East Africa,’ in YMCA War Work files, YMCA.

The death of these two co-workers gave the other secretaries even greater resolve to establish a permanent work in East Africa so that their lives might not have been lost in vain.

In evaluating how these missionaries viewed each other, it is obvious that they derived much encouragement from personal visits with each other. They were caught between their western backgrounds which could not totally be denied and their desire to identify with Africans who could not totally accept them culturally. Therefore, their social interaction with each other was probably an important mechanism for processing their experiences and in making cultural adjustments.

Yergan was evacuated from Mombasa in 1918, weakened by repeated bouts of malaria. In his final days in East Africa he continued with the training of the new secretaries, helping them to get settled in their work.¹³⁴ He too had financial difficulties and often mentioned them in his letters to Moorland, his director. In one letter he wrote:

I am taking this opportunity to ask you however to try to have our committee continue my support in present salary in order that I might not be prevented from gaining the richest experience because of financial worry. As I've already intimated to you I shall not let such thoughts come between me and that which God is leading me into. I believe He will take care of it.¹³⁵

Yergan went to Africa before America entered WWI. However, when he returned to the States, he was drafted into the military along with nearly 400,000 other African Americans who served at bases in Europe and America during the

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Yergan to Moorland, 11 July 1916, 3, Moorland YMCA War Work files, MSRC.

war.¹³⁶ Moorland writes to Lloyd concerning Yergan, “Yergan is now a chaplain in the army. He was class one in the draft and we ordained him, and within about ten days he had his commission as first lieutenant. He is very happy at his new task—he is always happy when he has an opportunity for unlimited services. I do not think he will be very satisfied at any mere routine job again.”¹³⁷ Yergan had apparently recovered from the illnesses he contracted in Africa enough to be drafted into the Army. His ordination and commissioning as a chaplain supports the idea that as a YMCA secretary he was a missionary. Yergan writes from East Africa concerning his view of war, “Although I have a personal aversion to war and even our entering it, I trust that our men will not fail on any score where patriotism is called for.”¹³⁸

Simons’ diary for November 11, 1918, reads, “‘Peace, Germany agreed to Armistice,’ So reads the heading of today’s ‘second extra special’—and Nairobi has gone mad.”¹³⁹ Simons’ final dairy entry in Tanzania was dated 5 March 1919. It stated, “Spent all my time on deck for a last view of little old D.S.M.”¹⁴⁰ From here Simons served another five years in India and Burma with the YMCA before returning to the USA in 1924.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 5.

¹³⁷ Moorland to Lloyd in East Africa, 30 October 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

¹³⁸ Yergan to Moorland, 30 July 1917, Moorland YMCA War Files, MSRC.

¹³⁹ Simons, diary, 11 November 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹⁴⁰ Simons, diary, 5 March 1919, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹⁴¹ Simons, travel papers, box 5, William Simons papers, LOC. Simons’ passport indicates that he traveled to Egypt, Palestine, France and England en route to the USA.

Thomas Lloyd applied to the YMCA to stay in East Africa after the War was over. He wrote to Moorland:

I have been asked to consider foreign work, and I am attempting to meet the great need by agreeing to stay in Africa or the East until five years have expired, on condition that my fiancé, who is now doing YWCA work in the States, be sent out to me by the International Committee. In case the young lady, to whom I am engaged, is not sent or refuses to come out to me, I will have to return to the States at the close of my two years in Africa, which may mean the loss of a work that was hard fought for....I can't express just how badly we are needed out here to put reality into the native work, and if for no other reason than that one alone, I would be willing to double my time out here. Captain Lynes, the secretary in charge of war work in East Africa, is now taking the matter up with the New York Office and no doubt arrangements will be made for my changing from war work to the foreign secretaryship. He is very glad that I have come to this decision.¹⁴²

Unfortunately, his application to remain was denied by the YMCA. Lloyd wrote concerning his rejection, "As soon as my application was posted Mr. Vernon Nash, who is secretary of African work, got a reply to his application which states that the New York Office is not prepared to undertake his budget. So I feel quite sure that mine will be turned down on the same basis."¹⁴³ Both Stanley and Richey returned to the USA for health reasons.

Therefore as the last African American YMCA secretary to leave East Africa, Simons, took with him the YMCA's hopes for a continuation of the work it had started. Now someone was needed to reopen the work among the indigenous people. Since Yergan had been the original pioneer of the work it seemed right that he should

¹⁴² Lloyd to Moorland, 20 June 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

¹⁴³ Lloyd to Moorland, 5 August 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC.

be the one to lead the way back. However, the colonial government in Kenya was opposed to this and refused to grant him a visa.¹⁴⁴

In summary, African American missionaries generally embraced Africans as extended family. This was evident by their relationships through marriage, adoption, and the assistance they gave Africans in getting education. It was not unheard of for European missionaries to adopt African children as a way of rescuing them from some cultural practices such as the exposure of twins. However, for African American missionaries adoption was not a last resort, but an opportunity to share life and build leaders for the future. It showed the affinity these missionaries felt with the people of Africa.

They suffered health difficulties common to most people in that region and they didn't understand all the cultural practices they encountered. However, more than anything else they agreed that the primary difference between themselves and the Africans had to do with education.

Colonial government and missionary perceptions of Africa American Missionaries

The British colonial government was not generally enthusiastic about African Americans coming to Africa. The following letter, written in 1896 by Sir Harry Johnston, governor-general of Nyasaland, concerning concessions for land in Central Africa for a group of African American immigrants led by Dr. Albert Thorne, gives

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 4, footnote 22 for a further explanation of the rejection of Yergan's visa application by Kenya colonial officials.

an early indication of the attitude of a colonial administrator toward African

Americans coming to British Central Africa:

I might say quite frankly that we are not particularly anxious to have American or West Indian negroes - that is to say as to feel justified in assisting them to establish themselves there in any special way because we have found hitherto that men of this type do not stand the climate much better than Europeans and Indians, and they are much more disposed to grumble and give trouble, especially in quarreling with the natives.¹⁴⁵

There were some exceptions to Johnston's attitude among government officials one of which is particularly noteworthy. General Van der Venter, the South African (Afrikaner) commander of troops in East Africa sent a cable to the YMCA offices in New York City in 1917 requesting that they send four more African American secretaries in addition to the three already in the work. The YMCA responded to Van der Venter's request as quickly as possible and four additional candidates were soon on their way.¹⁴⁶ As a military commander with an almost entirely black army Van der Venter was certainly concerned for the welfare of his troops. However, his greatest concern was probably for a healthy army to push forward the war effort in East Africa rather than for their long-term educational development. It can only be wondered whether he would have been so enthusiastic about these missionaries if he had understood the educational and identity elements that they brought with them.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Sir Harry Johnston to J. Albert Thorne, 12 November 1896, Public Records Office (hereafter cited as PRO) FO 371/7316, Kew Gardens, London.

¹⁴⁶ A. Parry Park, 'Annual Report on the YMCA Work in East Africa,' 30 September 1917, 8, YMCA War Work files, YMCA archive. Park states in this report that 'General Van der Venter, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, cabled New York requesting that four colored secretaries be sent out in addition to the three already in the work. This coming from a Boer officer is highly significant of the esteem in which the work for colored troops and carriers is held.'

¹⁴⁷ See comments by Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 27, chapter 4 footnote 152.

As a South African Van der Venter may have found it easier to tolerate the education of Africans with whom he would not have to live in South Africa.

At any rate, Van der Venter's concern for the immediate needs of his troops was probably the main reason he invited these YMCA secretaries to East Africa and there should be no mistaking the fact that these secretaries went to East Africa with the intent of meeting Van der Venter's requirements. They also hoped that in the process of accomplishing their military objectives that they could establish an ongoing work after the war. As YMCA director for East Africa, C.R. Webster states in his report for 1917:

In arranging an Association program for natives emphasis has been placed on work for East Africans, the chief reason for this being that permanent work should be established in East Africa after the war....The fact that a natural missionary outlet is provided for the Christian coloured students of North America is not the least important consideration.¹⁴⁸

Contrasted with the YMCA's more liberal view towards the employment of African American secretaries was the attitude of the colonial police towards the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Nyasaland as late as 1940. Its significance is that it shows the colonial administration was still aware of Cheek and Delaney's role in the PIM 33 years after they had departed.

The Providence Industrial Mission was founded in the Chiradzulu district by John Chilembwe in 1900. Chilembwe was a Nyasaland native who went to America and returned in 1897. Shortly after he started mission work in the Protectorate he was joined by a Mr. Cheek and a Miss Delaney, both negroes born in America. Cheek became a preacher in the mission, and married a niece of Chilembwe's. Miss Delaney played the organ in John Chilembwe's church and taught singing and sewing. The Organisation of the National

¹⁴⁸ C.R. Webster, 'Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 1917,' YMCA War files, YMCA.

Baptist Convention, under whose auspices the PIM operates, is one of Negroes. It is stated that the Organisation is well run.¹⁴⁹

Although this report is, on the whole, positive, the fact that the police thought it necessary to evaluate this mission for subversive activity in 1940 indicates the cautious attitude they had toward it.

The Branches were rebuffed by the Church of Scotland missionaries at Blantyre for trying to build a school too close to their mission. Branch wrote to his mission concerning this conflict:

For the past year we have had, and just now are having, some peculiar experiences with the missionaries of a certain denomination. There are several large villages within eight miles of Blantyre, the headquarters of this established church. The chiefs of two of these villages, having heard of the Word of God as it is taught here at our mission, desired us to send them teachers, saying they would build the schoolhouse.

The minister of the mission heard of our plans to open a school so near to his mission. He went to the government, had the permit revoked, and had word sent to the chiefs that if they wished a school, they must get their permission and their teachers from the mission....both of these chiefs and their head men refused to receive their teachers.¹⁵⁰

Denominational rivalries and the question of mission polity were important issues in the early 1900s. The Branches had entered into Church of Scotland territory and they

¹⁴⁹ "Historical Survey of Native Controlled Missions Operating in Nyasaland," December 1940, Nyasaland Police, Zomba archives, copy located in Shepperson papers EUL. The question mark (?) in this quote is in the original.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Branch, letter printed in *ARSH*, 3 January 1907, 18. Branch specifically mentions the Scottish mission in another letter to his board, 'We are having great difficulty in securing books and other school supplies, as the Scottish mission refuses to sell us anything, on account of the Sabbath question.' *ARSH*, 18 October 1906, 13. The Branches treatment by the Scottish mission may have been the result of their conflict in mission polity as well as their differences in theology. Missions agencies were often protective of their territorial rights and registered their displeasure with other missions that sought to operate in their area.

were treated like intruders. This quote from Bridglal Pachai indicates some of the fear that Europeans had toward intruders:

A year later there was another Booth scare in the country when missionaries (the Blantyre ones particularly) and government officials understood that Booth was organizing the entry of American Negroes who were part of the 'Ethiopian' brand of religious politicians. In the event it was only Pastor Thomas H. Branch of the Seventh Day Adventists and his Negro family of five who arrived in Malawi in 1902.¹⁵¹

Contrasted with this fearful view of the Branches' arrival in Nyasaland was the view expressed by Joseph Booth, the English head of the Seventh-day Adventists mission in Nyasaland, in 1902:

I am delighted to see the gladness of the native of different tribes to see that Brother and Sister Branch have a visible and acknowledged relationship to them. Plainly they must increase while we must decrease in influence. I think this is as it should be. I sought for friends for the native whom they could at sight receive, and their reception of colored brethren—so called—is very gratifying; indeed the interest and confidence is [sic] mutual.¹⁵²

Booth's views of the Branches were unusual for an English missionary of that time and made him many enemies among settlers, colonial officials and even other missionaries. Booth's letter to Booker T. Washington, principal of Tuskegee Institute, states his unpopular view of equality of the races in 1913:

Now I have many enemies in Britain, to whom if Dr. Scott refers many such would try to veto my appeal, as they do not consider me sufficiently loyal to British ideals; which is true, since I try to be loyal to the Fatherhood of God & the Brotherhood of men, particularly those most needing & appreciating true Brotherhood on equal terms.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Bridglal Pachai, 'The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule,' *Journal of Social Science*, vol. 1, 1972, 12.

¹⁵² Booth to Seventh-day Adventists, October 5, 1902 in Seventh-day Adventists archive (hereafter cited as SDA), Silver Spring, Maryland.

¹⁵³ Booth letter to B.T. Washington, 14 October 1913, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 12, eds. Louis R. Harlan, and Raymond W. Smock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 350. (The

Booth's ideas of racial equality were so contrary to the norm in 1913, that his book, *Africa for the African*, was banned by the colonial government in Nyasaland.¹⁵⁴ It was determined to keep a firm handle on their rule over Africans by attempting to keep them uninformed about literature like Booth's. So suspicious was the colonial government of this literature that it banned some of it in a futile effort to keep Africans unenlightened about their equality.

In light of these attitudes, shared by many settlers and missionaries, against equality with Africans, it is little wonder that Ethiopianism, or the forming of churches independent of mission control, was the result. The connection between African Americans and Ethiopianism began with the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination in 1816 in Philadelphia as a protest of the unequal treatment they received in Methodist churches. This same denomination was introduced into Africa in 1896 for basically the same reason. AME historian Walton Johnson states in his article entitled, "The history of the AME Church in Zambia:"

The history of the church's birth and growth in the United States and in South Africa was widely known. The obvious similarity between the conditions in Northern Rhodesia and those facing the founding fathers of the church was very great. In a sense membership in the A.M.E. church represented an assertion of African pride in circumstances where it was otherwise suppressed.¹⁵⁵

emphasis in this quote is in original.)

¹⁵⁴ Joseph Booth, *Africa for the African*, (Baltimore: Press of the Educator of Morgan College, 1897)

¹⁵⁵ Walton R. Johnson, 'The History of the A.M.E. Church in Zambia,' *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, vol. 2, Fall 1974, 63. For further reading on the AME church in Zambia see also Walton Johnson, *Worship and Freedom*, (New York: Africana, 1977)

As African American historian Carol Page states, “The establishment of the independent Ethiopian Church as a protest organization in the Transvaal in 1893 and its subsequent merger with the (American) African Methodist Episcopal Church generated the first accusations from a South African Government that Africans were being negatively influenced by Black Americans.”¹⁵⁶

Scottish missionary Austin M. Caverhill made this evaluation of Cheek’s ministry in an article entitled “Ethiopianism” (1911) in *Life and Work in British Central Africa*:

I do not think that we have much to fear from the emissaries of negro churches in America. The native here does not greatly take to his black brother over the water, if we may judge from the success of John Cheek’s mission. That being so, the only thing that we have to fear, and endeavour to prevent, is the secession of the Native Christians themselves....Ethiopianism will still be to us what it was to me before I was asked to take this paper - only a name.¹⁵⁷

It is ironic that although Caverhill’s view was probably representative of many European missionaries, it was the frustration caused by years of delay in achieving any degree of independence from mission control that led many Africans to start

¹⁵⁶ Carol Ann Page, ‘Black American in South Africa,’ University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1978, EUL, p. vi. Also on this topic see the article by Josephus Coan, ‘Redemption of Africa: The Vital Impulse of Black American Overseas Missionaries,’ in *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, Spring 1974.

¹⁵⁷ Austin M. Caverhill, ‘Ethiopianism,’ in *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, vol. 34, 1912, 30. Caverhill goes on to give a benefit of Africans going to the USA for education, ‘it forced the hand of the South African Government to provide the very highest education possible for the native, since it was found that disloyalty was chiefly fostered by those who had gone to America to complete their training.’ Caverhill, *Life and Work*, vol. 33, 1911, 383. In other words to keep Africans from going to America for education the colonial government had to support comparable schools in Africa like Fort Hare College founded in 1916. Caverhill goes on to state, “Now we all know the attitude of Colonial sentiment on the whole towards the educated and Christian native. The declared policy of many was ‘no equality for black with white in Church nor State’ The seed sown by such an attitude has borne fruit in the disloyal side of the Ethiopian movement, and made the watchword of the young Church, ‘Africa for the Africans,’ instead of, as we all would have rejoiced to have it, ‘Africa for Christ.’”

independent churches. The only way these European missionaries could prevent the secession of African Christians to form independent churches was to release control of their missions to them. It is with little surprise that African American missionaries received the ire of many white mission agencies for their willingness to turn over their missions to African leadership so quickly.

W.A. Elmslie, missionary of the Scottish Livingstonia mission, stated in 1909 about Ethiopianism:

Ethiopianism is one of the results of the migration of natives to the labour centres in the Transvaal.....It is a symptom of a common African disease. "mafuma ouse" [sic](chiefs all) which is at the basis of Ethiopianism. The native can jump into a white man's clothes and fancy he is every whit as good as he, so the next step is to think that he no longer needs his presence and aid. This is a failing in the African against which missions have to battle.¹⁵⁸

Rather than seeing self-government as a failing, as Elmslie does, African American missionaries welcomed it and therefore distinguished themselves among the Africans. The condescending attitude expressed by missionaries like Elmslie let the African know he was viewed as inferior. It should be noted that not all European missionaries shared Elmslie's extreme view. Although Elmslie apparently found nothing inappropriate about his attitude towards the people he was sent to serve, it was guaranteed to be resented by them and to sow seeds of independence.

Bengt Sundkler states in his book, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, about P.J. Mzimba, founder of the African Presbyterian Church, in 1898:

One of the reasons why Mzimba broke with his mission and with that great missionary statesman, Dr. J. Stewart of Lovedale, was that he had been given considerable sums of money in Scotland. On returning to South Africa, he

¹⁵⁸ W.A. Elmslie, 'Ethiopianism in Nyasaland,' in *Livingstonia News*, vol. 2, no. 5, October 1909, 72, 74. The correct spelling of the word for 'all' is 'onse.'

claimed the right to allocate these sums to such objects as he pleased, without regard to the opinion of the Lovedale presbytery. His position as a respected pastor of the Presbyterian mission congregation at Lovedale made his secession the more serious. Two-thirds of this congregation followed him.¹⁵⁹

No doubt the allocation of the funds given to Mzimba was only the final event in a line of many that convinced him to break his ties with the Free Church of Scotland. It was similar to the experience of Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, who departed the Methodist Episcopal church after being forced from the communion table with other white worshipers. It was one thing to live with racism in society, but to experience it in worshipping God was more than many, like Mzimba and Allen, could tolerate and therefore they started independent or Ethiopian churches.¹⁶⁰

Branch makes the following statement concerning the Ethiopian or independent church movement in a letter to his mission in 1907, “But I cannot tell how it will be, on account of the native uprising in Natal. This dreadful unrest is said to be due to the teaching of the Afro-American missionaries, under the name of the Ethiopian movement—‘Africa for the African.’”¹⁶¹ It appears that Branch did not

¹⁵⁹ Bengt G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1948 reprinted 1964), 42,43.

¹⁶⁰ James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), vii. Mokone broke with the South Africa Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1892 due to a long string of grievances similar to Mzimba and Allen. ‘They called themselves, ‘Ethiopians,’ after the prophecy of African redemption in Psalm 68.’

¹⁶¹ Thomas Branch, letter printed in *ARSH*, 3 January 1907, 18. For a background study on the use of the word ‘Ethiopian’ see George Shepperson’s article entitled ‘Ethiopianism: Past and Present,’ in *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, ed. C.G. Baeta (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 249. Shepperson divides the usage of the word ‘Ethiopian’ into four periods: ‘(1) from 1611 to 1871; (2) from 1872 to 1928; (3) from 1929 to 1963; (4) after 1963.’ p. 250 Shepperson defines the period the Branches were in Nyasaland as, ‘...the classical period of Ethiopianism because it was at this time that

appreciate his mission being connected with the Zulu uprising in Natal in 1906. It also appears that he did not approve of the connection between African Americans and Ethiopianism. Regardless of whether or not he approved of it, Ethiopianism and African Americans were linked in the minds of many people in Africa. Novels like John Buchan's, *Prester John*, which was published in 1910, about the Reverend John Laputa, an African educated in the United States, who returned to South Africa and led a rebellion against the colonial government, confirmed the fears of many colonial settlers.¹⁶²

The YMCA was one of the few organizations of the 1920s to hold a liberal view of the use of African American missionaries. However, it was far from holding the attitude of equality that was needed. E.C. Carter, foreign secretary of the English National Council of the YMCA writes in 1921 concerning African American secretaries:

Similarly our experience with American Negro Secretaries when they are men of fine education, who have had the specialised Y.M.C.A. professional training, which they get in some of the institutions in America, they are men who have been given a fully specialised training for public leadership in the kind of social and religious service for which the Y.M.C.A. stands....Of all the evidence that has been submitted to us it looks as if Negro Y.M.C.A. secretaries trained in the methods of the rural or village or farming Y.M.C.A.s

it exercised its greatest political influence and was most widely noticed in the European, American and African press. The foundation of independent African Churches, either by secession from established bodies or by relatively indigenous growth, appeared to threaten European domination in areas with substantial white settlement such as South and Central Africa.' Shepperson goes on to state that Ethiopianism was a 'reaction against over-strict European disciplining of African converts by European missionaries; the desire of some African separatist ministers to increase their personal power and status by administering church property and monies; the creation of tribal Churches in which due respect was paid to African custom; and a rejection of the colour bar in many European-controlled Churches.' p. 251 See also by Shepperson 'America Through Africa and Asia,' in *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1980, 45-65.

¹⁶² John Buchan, *Prester John*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1910), 131. Buchan writes, "For years there has been plenty of this talk in South Africa, chiefly among Christian Kaffirs. It is what they call 'Ethiopianism,' and American negroes are the chief apostles."

of India and of Canada and of the United States, would be of incalculable value in some of the backward agricultural and village areas.¹⁶³

From the wording of this quote, Carter appears to be cautious concerning African American missionaries. He seems to hold a high view of their value in reaching 'backward agricultural and village areas.' This type of vague wording in regard to African American missionaries was often used to allow a broad interpretation according to the preferences of the writer. Carter goes on to make a distinction in the type of African American applicant the YMCA was looking for:

There are those whose interest goes along the line of a great Pan-African political movement in antagonism to the White. There are those on the other hand who have a deep sense of missionary obligation and who feel that through education, through play, through religious leadership, through industrial and agricultural effort, through the promotion of co-operative credit, adapted to meet African conditions, in co-operation between leaders of all races, will the largest result come. It is in the latter field that the Foreign Department is interested...¹⁶⁴

What Carter seems to be saying is that the YMCA was looking for African American secretaries who 'knew their place,' or who were, as Governor Northey of Kenya referred to Aggrey, "the Tuskegee type."¹⁶⁵

The YMCA's official policy on race was at this time was one of 'separate but equal' which reflected the general attitude in America at that time. However, the idea of equality was never as important as maintaining separation. Mjagkij, YMCA

¹⁶³ E.C. Carter to Oswin Bull in Capetown, 26 July 1921, 3, Yergan files, YMCA.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Bottomley to Oldham, 21 July 1923, PRO, CO 533/305. Bottomley states, 'The Governor is in no way averse from the best type of negro missionary (e.g. the 'Tuskegee' type) entering Kenya and, as he said at the meeting, would welcome Mr. Aggrey's accompanying Dr. Jesse Jones and Dr. Garfield Williams on their proposed visit to Kenya.'

historian, writes, “The YMCA’s position on racial issues is not surprising. The association, like other institutions in the United States, was part of American society, and its members were likely to share contemporary racial beliefs.”¹⁶⁶ This view is supported by the following report written about Yergan by YMCA secretary, A. Parry Park, “Yergan has done very fine work for us. His wonderful spirit and energy, coupled with a splendid judgement and ripe experience, have made him invaluable....His colour handicap is overcome with a spirit of humility and devotion to the Cause, together with a marked degree of common sense.”¹⁶⁷ According to Park, Yergan’s ‘colour handicap’ was not considered an insurmountable difficulty because he was an outstanding worker. Yergan proved he was good enough to be called equal with other YMCA secretaries by exceeding the expectations of the average secretary. However, the stress Yergan experienced for being a pioneer took its toll.¹⁶⁸

YMCA secretary, Simons, wrote in his diary of some of his own experiences with racism in Africa:

As I worked on my table today my mind was rather full (as usual) of the little unkindnesses I have to endure at the hands of the mzungus about town and I thought rather bitterly: ‘If they only knew that I am judging their nation by them, they would change their conduct.’ Then quick as a flash the thought

¹⁶⁶ Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 128.

¹⁶⁷ A. Perry Park, ‘Annual Report for the Year ending 30 September 1917,’ p. 12. Max Yergan files, YMCA archives.

¹⁶⁸ The psychological impact on all these missionaries of their being not fully accepted as Americans and yet not fully accepted as Africans is an area open to further research. Yergan’s sacrifice helped pave the way for the Civil Rights movement of the 60s. His true contribution to that movement has yet to be fully appreciated in history. His role in the founding of the Council for Africa, with singer Paul Robeson, will be discussed at the end of chapter 5. David Anthony III, professor of history at University of California Santa Cruz, is writing a forthcoming biography on Yergan.

came that maybe the American Negro is being judged by me - my conduct etc. How unfair such judgement would be is too easily apparent. I began to number the good things done for me by the mzungus - a gift of 7 ft of lumber for a bat by one, the use of machinery and electricity for a whole day by another, a gift of petrol for my old bike by another, careful as well as cheerful treatment of my sore foot by others - and I was ashamed.¹⁶⁹

This quote is important to balance the impression that these missionaries resented all whites. Nothing could have been further from the truth. However, just because they repeatedly bore insults and slights without comment, did not mean they liked being treated in this way.

In summary, it has been shown that colonial officials, settlers and often missionaries generally viewed African American missionaries as inferior to themselves and if they were to be allowed into colonial Africa at all, they needed supervision by white missionaries. The thought of treating African or African American missionaries as equals was objectionable to most Europeans at that time and gravely upset their sense of rightness. Sensing this attitude towards themselves, African American missionaries resolved to prove, by superior performance, that they were worthy of equality. This required a high degree of commitment to endure the relational difficulties that occurred. This fact no doubt led some to choose to serve with African American run mission boards. For those who chose to serve with boards like the London Missionary Society and the YMCA, a Christlike attitude was required to handle the racially hostile environments that they had to work in.

¹⁶⁹ Simons, diary, 22 November 1918, William Simons Papers, box 1, LOC.

Interaction With Other Religions

African American missionaries came into contact with many different religions. However, the main ones they commented on in their writings were Islam and the general category of African traditional religions.

Islam's presence in Africa dates back almost to the beginning of the religion itself. Edward Blyden, an emigrant from St Thomas in the Caribbean to Liberia, stated, in 1887, about the spread of Islam in Africa, "To Akbah, a distinguished Muslim general, belongs the credit or discredit of having subdued North Africa to Islam. He marched from Damascus at the head of ten thousand enthusiastic followers, and in a short time spread his conquests along the shores of North Africa."¹⁷⁰ Blyden goes on to describe the spread of Islam among Liberian tribes:

Mohammedanism found its Negro converts at home in a state of freedom and independence of the teachers who brought it to them. When it was offered to them they were at liberty to choose for themselves. The Arab missionaries, whom we have met in the interior, go about without 'purse or scrip', and disseminate their religion by quietly teaching the Koran.¹⁷¹

Blyden seems to contradict himself by first depicting Islam's spread by war and then referring to its spread in a peaceful quiet way. Probably both are true to some degree at different times and it is the writer's choice as to which side of the story they wish to emphasize. Blyden was known to be positive toward Islam in general and

¹⁷⁰ Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London: W.B. Whittingham and Co., 1887 reprinted 1967 Edinburgh University Press), 5.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

therefore it is not surprising that he chose to emphasize the positive side of the spread of Islam in his part of Africa.

His description of the spread of Christianity is quite different from his view of the spread of Islam:

Christianity, on the other hand, came to the Negro as a slave, or at least as a subject race in a foreign land. Along with the Christian teaching, he and his children received lessons of their utter and permanent inferiority and subordination to their instructors, to whom they stood in the relation of chattels.¹⁷²

Blyden's favorable view of Islam has often been interpreted by some as a conversion on his part. However, the thing that appealed to Blyden about Islam was not so much the religion, but the way in which he perceived it was presented in relation to the local culture. A religion, like Christianity, which in the USA was often shrouded in the idea of the permanent inferiority of his people, could not help but repulse him. He therefore looked favorably on a religion like Islam which was seen as affirming the cultural values of his people.

However, in one area Blyden sharply departed from Islamic teaching and this related to his views on gender. He wrote in 1887, "I cannot see why our sisters should not receive exactly the same general culture as we do. I think that progress of the country will be more rapid and permanent when the girls receive the same general training as the boys."¹⁷³

¹⁷² Ibid., 12.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 89.

Blyden had an interesting solution to what he saw as the imposition of a system of racial inferiority often associated with the teaching of Christianity. He states this solution in the following letter concerning the beginning of a new college in Liberia:

The instruments of culture which we shall employ in the College will be chiefly the classics and mathematics. By classics I mean the Greek and Latin languages and their literature. In those languages there is not, as far as I know, a sentence, a word, or a syllable disparaging to the Negro. He may get nourishment from them without taking in any race-poison. They will perform no sinister work upon his consciousness, and give no unholy bias to his inclinations.¹⁷⁴

Blyden's views are noteworthy but raise some difficult questions in a number of places. The Greek and Latin languages were instruments of Greco-Roman culture, but apparently Blyden did not find this culturally repulsive to his people. Also Christianity did not first come to the African through slavery, but through Christian missionaries sent across North Africa and Nubia from Jerusalem. However, these difficulties in Blyden's views should not prevent his major idea from coming across. He wanted a culturally relevant religion. Islam was seeking to make itself culturally relevant and this forced many Christians like Blyden to rethink the relevance of their own faith.

From the letters written by the YMCA secretaries it appears that quite a few of the carriers and troops in East Africa during WWI practiced Islam. As Stanley says of the troops in Dar es Salaam,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 84. Blyden may be contrasted with Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 123, who said, 'In fact, one of the saddest things I saw during the month of travel which I have described was a young man, who attended some high school, sitting down in a one-room cabin, with grease on his clothing, filth all around him, and weeds in the yard and garden, engaged in studying a French grammar.'

Most of them are Mohammedans. In many instances the government prohibits Christian teaching. I am, therefore, camouflaging and doing it through example. I enjoy my work. To see the boys attempting to read, write and figure is a thrilling sight. They are eager and if one does not object will remain in school all night. They must be driven away.¹⁷⁵

It is not clear to what degree their eagerness to learn correlated with their Islamic faith. It is clear, however, that their Islamic belief in no way affected their treatment by Stanley in terms of education. All who wanted to learn were invited to attend classes. The difficulties in sharing the Christian message with them did not seem to be insurmountable according to Stanley.

Simons' diary records his view of a group of Islamic carriers he was working with, "There is a fine opportunity here for real effective work. About fifty boys enrolled now some of whom are from far off Uganda and all of whom are Mohamedans [sic] to my keen regret."¹⁷⁶ Simons made no apology for his desire to see people converted to Christianity. On the other hand, he had no difficulty teaching a class full of Islamic students.

Yergan gave this account of his contact with an Islamic youth:

We sent out one afternoon, in East Africa, for a young fellow to help me with a cinema machine. They brought in a young fellow, with his face pockmarked, nothing pleasant to look upon. Yet he stood before me with all the pride of the Mohammedan that he was. It was difficult to get him to associate with the Christian boys who had come down from the Mission stations to help. He felt his position was far superior to theirs. But I can never forget the attitude of the Christian boys toward him—how kind they were in the face of his attitude. One night he was found around the tent where we were holding our service, listening to what was going on. Next midweek, he was again found in the same place. Then I asked him why he

See also King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, 37.

¹⁷⁵ Walter P. Stanley letter in *Lincoln University Herald*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1919, 9,10.

¹⁷⁶ Simons, diary, 27 May 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

had been there. He said: 'Something in the life of these Christian boys has appealed to me. Their attitude has been so different compared with the attitude of other Mohammedans.'¹⁷⁷

So in terms of Islam these missionaries had an openness that allowed them contact and a willingness to teach regardless of their students' religious belief. On the other hand, as Christian missionaries they made no apology for seeking to share the gospel by word and deed with those who would listen.

In terms of African traditional religions, these missionaries were eager to learn as much as they could. As Simons writes in his diary:

As we went home, we saw an ingoma or native dance at last. And a weird affair it was. People standing in two large circles the leader within the circle, all singing and at a certain beat in the music all jump up. The leader, working himself into a sweat and a frenzy of excitement, even putting sand into his eyes and having something like soot sprinkled upon his forehead. He wore wooden rattles on his legs. Everyone very solemn.¹⁷⁸

'Ngoma' is Kiswahili for 'drum' and was a dance generally used to call ancestral spirits to a meeting or send them away. This tradition was stronger in the coastal regions of East Africa where Simons was first stationed than in Nairobi where he later moved. Simons had been looking forward to observing an Ngoma and took the time to describe it in his diary that evening as the most significant event of the day.

William Sheppard, African American missionary to Congo, had a keen ability to understand what each situation required culturally. He gave this description of the local custom in approaching a king:

The king in ordinary costume was seated on a low stool and we were seated on a large exquisitely woven mat. The king greeted us with 'Wyni' (You

¹⁷⁷ Manuscript entitled 'Max Yergan,' September 1921, Yergan files, YMCA.

¹⁷⁸ Simons, diary, 16 June 1918, William Simons papers, LOC.

have come). We both leaned forward and clapped our hands twice repeated together, 'Ndini' (We have come). During all the interview we clapped our hands after every sentence. If the king coughed, we coughed, if he sneezed, we sneezed.¹⁷⁹

Sheppard was clear in his opposition of some cultural practices, "I told the king in the strongest language I could command that it was wrong without the least shadow of justification. (to bury the living with the dead). I tried to prove to him that the poisonous cup was a very cruel and unjust practice and there were no witches."¹⁸⁰

Sheppard was in the Congo for five years before he saw his first convert, but his regard for the people was not hampered by this slow response to his message.¹⁸¹ He writes, "I grew very fond of the Bakuba and it was reciprocated. They were the finest race I had seen in Africa, dignified, graceful, courageous, honest, with an open, smiling countenance and really hospitable. Their knowledge of weaving, embroidering, wood carving and smelting was the highest in equatorial Africa."¹⁸²

Sheppard also collected and studied numerous artifacts which helped him understand the Bakuba culture. He was made a Fellow of the (British) Royal Geographical Society for his discoveries in the Congo. His linguistic ability as well as his cultural sensitivity helped him survive many difficult situations in his travels.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, [1910]), 37.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 137. These artifacts are located at Hampton University, Virginia and the Presbyterian Historical Society archive, Montreat, North Carolina.

J.E.K. Aggrey, Ghanaian educator, states of the traditional beliefs of his people in an article published in 1923:

All Africans are religious, intensely so. In certain aspects they are like the Athenians - over-religious. Every African knows a God - immortal, majestic, and avenging who is above other and less powerful gods, an unfailing Friend, a Strong Man, yes, and a Woman also—a Father-Mother God. We have sinned against Him. He used to be very near, and because of our transgressions He went away....To the African's soul, however, the name and personality of Jesus and Him crucified alone answers all questions. We always felt there ought to be somebody like that.¹⁸⁴

Aggrey saw educated African American missionaries as playing a key role in presenting this message to his fellow Africans. He often used Max Yergan as an example they should follow in his appeals to graduates of African American colleges.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

In spite of the similarity of race, African heritage and some aspects of culture between East Africans and African Americans, there were still differences between them culturally. African American missionaries had to learn new languages, new cultural practices and they experienced sickness and other health adjustments just as many other missionaries did.

¹⁸³ For further information on Sheppard see, Phipps, *Sheppards and Lapsley* (Louisville: 1991).

¹⁸⁴ J.E.K. Aggrey, 'The Native Students of Africa,' *The Student World*, vol. 26 no. 2, April 1923, 70. For more information on Aggrey see *Aggrey of Africa*, by E.W. Smith (London, 1929).

¹⁸⁵ Kenneth J. King, 'James E.K. Aggrey: Collaborator, Nationalist, Pan-African,' in *The Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 3 , no. 3, Fall 1969, 516.

The evaluation of the Hemans' 18 year experience in Africa showed that, no matter how much experience they had gained on the mission field, they were still seen as incapable of leading their own mission without white supervision. When health difficulties forced this mission to face the issue of either giving the Hemans' greater responsibility for the mission's station or leaving it in the hands of younger inexperienced artisan missionaries, it chose the latter. These younger missionaries made it clear that they would not tolerate Hemans' leadership, as valuable as it might have been, because of his race. European mission agencies like the LMS seemed convinced that neither African nor African American missionaries were capable of doing mission work apart from white supervision.

Although missionaries like Thomas Branch may not have been pleased at being identified with Ethiopianism, the idea of independent churches and African Americans were generally associated with each other. This was partially due to the founding of the South African branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1896. This connection was seen by many Africans as a positive one, but by most Europeans, like Elmslie and Caverhill, as decidedly negative primarily because independence implied equality with whites.

Education was seen as essential by African American missionaries. The primary thing that prevented them from turning over their missions to African leadership was lack of education. The willingness of African American missionaries to provide education was only exceeded by the Africans' desire for as much of it as they could get.

It was clear that just having a similar cultural and racial heritage was not enough to promote the reconnection between these missionaries and Africans. It was the interaction between these two groups that strengthened their connection. Marriage, adoption and helping Africans get education in the USA further helped foster closer relationships.

Many colonial administrators and European missionaries viewed these missionaries with suspicion. South African, General Van der Venter, probably invited the African Americans YMCA secretaries to come help his troops in East Africa because he wanted to win the war. This goal was accepted by the seven secretaries who served in East Africa during the war, but they also hoped to develop an ongoing YMCA presence after the war was over. This hope was dashed as Yergan's application for re-entry was refused by the colonial government.

The issue of race played an important role where African American missionaries served with European mission boards. The YMCA secretaries and the Hemans who served with the LMS were viewed as liabilities by some within their mission simply because of their race. Missionaries like Yergan felt that outstanding performance could disprove the negative racial assumptions held by their co-workers.

Even the YMCA, which had a more liberal racial policy than most organizations of its day, was committed to keeping its branches racially separate. The difficulty of dealing with the social equality required by missionaries on a mission station was solved by many mission agencies by excluding African American missionaries.

African American missionaries interaction with other religions like Islam and African traditional religions was characterized by openness. Many of the students who attended the YMCA schools were identified by these missionaries as being Islamic or having backgrounds in traditional religions. They made no distinction between them and other students in terms of classes, but neither did they make any apology for sharing the gospel by life and word.

CHAPTER IV

AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARY MOTIVATION AND IMPACT

The many erroneous ideas held by the people at home in regard to African Missions have led me to write this little story....So many have written and spoken concerning my people in Africa and have either attributed all of their ingenuity to the white man or discredited their capabilities altogether, that I am glad to be able to give a true testimony of what I really saw in the land of my fathers.¹

Clinton C. Boone

In this comment from the preface to his book, Boone expressed his concern that a true picture of African missions be communicated to the people in his home community. He wanted to dispel any false impressions that were circulating about Africa in the African American community of 1927. By sharing his experience in Africa, he hoped to strengthen the ties between African Americans and Africans and bring about a fresh outpouring of support for missions.

This chapter will first discuss the key motivating factors behind African American missionaries going to East Africa. Did they consider themselves expatriates or repatriates? Were they trying to escape racism in the USA by going to East Africa? Did they see themselves as emigrants from the USA or missionaries? Were they 'Pan-Africanists' or 'Cultural Imperialists'? The next section will evaluate the impact they had on the peoples of East Africa, the impact East Africans had on them and the impact they had on their home communities in the USA. This

¹ Clinton C. Boone, *The Congo As I Saw It* (New York: J.J. Little and Ives Company, 1927), v, 43. Boone was an African American missionary to Congo serving jointly with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Lott Carey Missionary Convention. His papers can be consulted through the American Baptist Historical Society, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

includes changes in views of African identity and African consciousness, attitude towards emigration and long-term reconnection with East Africa.

African American missionaries to East Africa hoped that a stronger connection between Africans and African Americans might not only produce a greater outpouring of support for Africa from African Americans, but also a greater understanding of African identity by African Americans.

An article in the *Mission Herald*, concerning Baptist missionary, Harrison Bouey, discussed the 'reflex influence' of the gospel on USA churches:

In an attempt to persuade the NBC [National Baptist Convention] to adopt a more active role, Bouey spoke of the 'reflex influence' deriving from foreign mission work. If the NBC Baptists would devote more attention to the welfare of the non-Christian Liberians, he argued, the black American Baptists would see that their local, state, and 'national work would all prosper.'²

Was this suggestion just a tool used by Bouey to persuade a mission board to increase its giving to Liberia? How exactly would the home churches 'prosper' from sending missionaries to Liberia? African American missionaries like Bouey believed that heightened awareness about Africa was the key to raising funds it needed from America. However, this heightened awareness about Africa also brought some

² *Mission Herald* (hereafter cited as *MH*), vol. 8, July 1902, 2. This editorial was probably written by Lewis G. Jordan the founding editor of *MH* from 1896-1921. A further editorial of Chilembwe's history, probably written by J.E. East in *MH*, vol. 29, no. 10, November 1926, 5. It states, 'Until 1915 the work in Nyasaland steadily grew and succeeded. At that time trouble began and misfortune befell it. The late Rev. Chilembwe very unwisely, being guided by the same Rev. Booth, who in earlier days brought him to this country, is said to have led an uprising, which resulted in the death of several, Europeans and natives. As a result of this the mission was destroyed, the beautiful church edifice and mission home were razed to the ground....Dr. Malekebu attempted to go back in 1921, but was forcibly sent out of the country when it was understood he was going as a missionary.' Was it not the reflex influence of the gospel in Nyasaland that was partially responsible for the reopening of the PIM in 1926?

benefit of a strengthened ethnic identity among African Americans in the early 1920s. Immediate logic might say that it would be much easier to quantify the amount of money and the number of missionaries who went to East Africa than to quantify the impact a knowledge of East Africa had on strengthening the sense of ethnic identity among African Americans. This chapter will investigate the key motivating factors behind African American missionaries going to East Africa and their impact on both the East African and African American communities.

Factors Relating to the Motivation of African American Missionaries

Repatriates or Expatriates?

In the 1800s, when the British Navy captured slave vessels sailing from Africa and returned them to Sierra Leone the captives were called repatriates. The question then arises, were African American missionaries to East Africa repatriates or expatriates? Did they see themselves as going home to Africa or as going to a foreign land? It seems valid to ask this question considering the fact that virtually all African Americans have some African ancestry. Most of these ancestors came to America as slaves having been kidnapped against their wills. For most African Americans the knowledge of this capture has been lost in the generations that separate them from the actual event. To what degree African identities remain in the

African Diaspora is still debated today.³ However, for the purpose of this research it is assumed that some ethnic affinity still exists between African Americans and Africa. Therefore, the idea of reconnection between the two groups is a valid one for this research.

In chapter one it was shown that the freedom that came with the end of slavery was seen by many former slaves as bringing with it a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of those still in slavery. William J. Harvey III, corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, an African American denomination, identified this feeling of responsibility as a major factor in the post-Civil War missionary movement among African Americans.⁴

The testimonies of some of the missionaries to East Africa explain how they came to understand Africa and their decision to go there as missionaries. YMCA secretary Max Yergan had a grandfather who hoped that one of his grandsons would be a missionary to Africa.⁵ While at a student YMCA convention Yergan, on the program to make brief remarks, shared his decision to drop his pursuit of law as a life work and enter some form of Christian service. He later stated that his grandfather's

³ For a further discussion of the reconnection between Africa and African Americans see chapter 2.

⁴ Interview with Dr. William J. Harvey III on 8 November 1996. According to Harvey, the feeling of many African Americans after the Civil War was that God had set the slaves free and they therefore had a responsibility to express their appreciation by helping others less fortunate than themselves. See Joseph Harris, *Global Dimension of the African Diaspora* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993) for information on the repatriation of former slaves to East Africa.

⁵ Ralph W. Bullock, *In Spite of Handicaps* (New York: Press Association, 1927), 111. This rare book is available at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, Washington, D.C. Shaw University Library archive commencement programme for 14 May 1914 lists James Max Yergan as receiving a BA.

wish influenced his decision to go to Africa as a YMCA secretary.⁶ When he informed his co-workers, Jesse Moorland and Channing Tobias, of his decision to go overseas as a missionary, they had misgivings about what his departure would do to the state of the YMCA work in the USA. However, they agreed that if Yergan was convinced that he was 'called of God' then they would not stand in his way. Within five weeks of this time, Yergan was on his way to India.⁷ Why Yergan's grandfather wanted a grandson to go to Africa can only be speculated upon, but it would seem to indicate that some emotional connection still existed for him with that continent.

William Henry Simons, YMCA secretary to East Africa during WWI, says this of his initial impression of Africa, "The first thought of Africa which really made an impression on my mind came while I was quite a small boy. Playing on the floor with my blocks one day I heard my father telling my mother about an address on Africa he had just heard a returned missionary deliver."⁸ Simons, the eldest sibling in a family of thirteen children was greatly influenced by his father's desire to be a missionary and no doubt his mother's as well. Simons' sister Minnie wrote, "Evelyn Esther, the twin sister of Arthur Augustus, finished Benedict and started teaching, but her heart was set on becoming a missionary and why not? Mama had certainly had us all doing missionary work for our neighbors."⁹

⁶ Ibid., 112-113.

⁷ Ibid., 114. Yergan began his mission as a YMCA secretary to India and then after a few months was transferred to East Africa.

⁸ William Simons, 'Africa in Transition' speech, n.d., William Simons papers, box 1, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LOC).

Minnie Simons goes on to write about her brother: “William Henry, my oldest brother, was named for Grandfather William Henry. He, brother William, was in nature a copy of Papa, who did so want to go to Africa as a missionary. Papa did not make it, but William spent fourteen years of his life in Africa.”¹⁰ Simons fulfilled the dreams of his parents to do mission work in Africa. He grew up in a family that was positive towards both Africa and missions. This positive home environment must have played an important role in his decision to go to East Africa as a missionary.

Did Simons go to Africa because he wanted to return home? Certainly he had experiences that made him feel at home. One occurred while traveling through South Africa on his way to East Africa. His diary entry for 14 April 1918 reads:

The incident of today was the privilege to hear native singing. At a little kirk we visited we were pleased to find natives singing our familiar hymns in their language without musical accompaniment. But for the strange language it sounded like a chorus I have often heard at home—the same minor runs, heavy bass and high tenor. There was also that Negro practice of letting one person sing a verse or a stanza alone then the others join in volumes, also that of humming certain parts instead of using the words.¹¹

Simons was pleased and surprised to find that many of the people he met in South Africa were interested in how they could get an education in America. It is clear from his diary entries that he felt a kinship with the South Africans and recognized some similarities between their culture and his own.

⁹ Minnie Simons Williams, *A Colloquial History of a Black South Carolina Family* (Washington, D.C.: Minnie S. Williams, 1990) 61. It is called the ‘red book’ for identification purposes within the family. It gives the background of the Simons family. Of the thirteen children only William and Evelyn took definite steps to educate themselves as missionaries.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹ Simons, diary, 24 April 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

Lewis G. Jordan was founding-editor of the *Afro-American Mission Herald*, (later shortened to *Mission Herald*) from 1896-1921. He explained his motivation for helping to send missionaries like Landon Cheek and Emma Delaney to Africa:

From our knowledge of the Great Commission and our consciousness of the duty we owe to the unsaved in all lands, we already see that we ought to make a great advance in foreign missions during 1907: First because it is a solemn obligation to our Lord, made at the time of our conversion: Secondly, because it is a blessed privilege to be a co-worker with Him, in Soul winning: Thirdly, because of our own knowledge of the great benefits which we enjoy because of the grace of God, our great material prosperity as a people and our intelligence and numerical strength as a denomination: A fourth reason, which should urge us to advance is the need of the perishing nations - a need that is moral and spiritual.¹²

Jordan was not just addressing the spiritual needs of the people in Africa as a motivating factor for African American missions, but the need to uplift an entire people. It was all part of his understanding of what freedom was about. Jordan gained his freedom after growing up as a nameless slave on a Mississippi plantation. He eventually went on to become secretary of a mission board and helped over 200 Africans gain education in American institutions.¹³

African American missionaries went to East Africa neither as expatriates nor repatriates. They saw themselves as having some kinship and responsibility, but also some cultural diversity. Walter Williams summed up his study of this issue by

¹² Lewis G. Jordan, editorial, *Mission Herald* (hereafter cited as *MH*), vol. 11, no. 1, January 1907, 2. A biography on Jordan is in the process of being written by Rev. Charles Walker according to Harvey.

¹³ An entry on Jordan by Rodney Orr is included in Gerald Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997). Other books by Jordan are, *Up the Ladder in Foreign Missions*, 1901, *Pebbles from an African Beach*, 1917, *Negro Baptist History, U.S.A., 1750-1930*, 1930, and *On Two Hemispheres: Bits from the Life of Lewis G. Jordan*, 1930. Some of these are rare books, but may be found in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City Public Library.

saying, “One conclusion to be drawn from this case study in ethnic relations is that cultural identity and common interests were more important than race in fostering close relations. The mere fact that Africans were of the same skin color was not enough, by itself, to produce a feeling of identity with them by black Americans.”¹⁴

In spite of this ethnic diversity, which by the way also made indigenous Africans feel foreign when visiting another tribe, there was a kindred feeling among these missionaries that the East Africans were their distant relatives and this motivated them to want to reconnect with them as missionaries.

Escapees from racism in the USA?

Did African American missionaries go to East Africa to escape racism in the USA? African American missionary-emigrant to Liberia, Thomas H. Amos, wrote, in 1868, to Rev. John M Dickey, president of the African American Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, encouraging his classmates to come to Liberia:

Liberia is advancing in intelligence, wealth, and national importance, and we think it might now afford a happy home for many of your Blackfolks who are striving for civil and political rights against a torrent of opposition. My opinion is that the American Blacks will never be fully enfranchised in the United States of America. They are weak when compared with the whites, numerically, politically and pecuniarily, they therefore must submit, to their condition right or wrong, why not advise them to seek a home, where they can be happy, and enjoy all the rights of free-men, and be a means, to a glorious end in this heathen land, and not think themselves an end—But a means in the civilization and Christianization of the multitudes of our benighted brethren.¹⁵

¹⁴ Walter L. Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa 1877-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 160.

However the date of this letter and the location, Liberia, an independent nation since 1847, make Amos' proposal an exception rather than the rule. The behavior of European customs agents in Africa towards early African American missionaries made it clear what these missionaries could expect in the way of treatment upon their arrival in East Africa. The customs agents at their ports of entry often demonstrated in their treatment of African American missionaries that racial prejudice was very much present in East Africa.¹⁶

However, just because racial prejudice was present in East Africa as in America did not mean that these missionaries were used to dealing with it. This quote by YMCA secretary Simons in his diary seems to indicate a weariness in having to face the race issue yet again:

To my very keen regret a conference was held, for the colored workers, at our school this P.M. so that Ballou might air a grievance which he did rather thoroughly. I was pained because of his surliness but could do nothing about it. Because of this and similar incidents, the one topic of conversation seems to be race prejudice. Just why I am doomed to hear a matter which is so distasteful, to me I cannot see.¹⁷

The concept central to in Social Darwinism of the evolution of the white race to the highest level of civilization was held by many whites at the turn of the 20th century. As sociologist Richard Hofstadter states in his book *Social Darwinism in*

¹⁵ Thomas Amos to John M. Dickey from Monrovia, July 1868, Presidential Correspondence file, Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archive, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.

¹⁶ Emma Delaney was detained at customs upon entering Africa. *MH*, July 1902, 1, (chapter 3 footnote 63). The Branches were detained for nine days, see Joseph Booth letter, 5 October 1902, (chapter 3 footnote 76). Cheek departed from Nyasaland through Mozambique in order to avoid customs, see Landon Cheek, 'Reminiscences of A Missionary,' *MH*, vol. 43, no. 2, May-June 1939, 17, (chapter 3 footnote 60).

¹⁷ Simons, diary, 30 May 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

American Thought, “The Darwinian mood sustained the belief in Anglo-Saxon racial superiority which obsessed many American thinkers in the latter half of the nineteenth century.”¹⁸ According to Hofstadter, although racism existed long before the publication of Darwin’s writings, Darwin’s major work, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* was easily seen by race proponents as positive proof for their views.¹⁹ Hofstadter states concerning this book, “Darwin had been talking about pigeons, but the imperialists saw no reason why his theories should not apply to men,…”²⁰ This pseudo-scientific view of the superiority of certain races was used to justify the subjugation of the ‘heathen.’ At the turn of the 20th century, to go against this view, supported by leading scientists, was seen as foolish in light of the so-called evidence in its favor.²¹ It was a feature of the gullibility of world opinion to accept an idea that appealed to its selfish nature.

¹⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, Inc., 1944 revised edition 1955), 172.

¹⁹ Ibid. He further explains, ‘Although Darwinism was not the primary source of the belligerent ideology and dogmatic racism of the late nineteenth century, it did become a new instrument in the hands of the theorists of race and struggle.’

²⁰ Ibid., 170. Hofstadter concludes with this statement written in 1944, ‘The standards of white culture are naively posited as a norm, and every deviation from the norm is automatically considered characteristic of a lower type.’ p. 193.

²¹ Andrew Ross states, in a paper entitled “The African Experience: Scientific Racism, Social Darwinism and the Churches,” presented at the North Atlantic Missions Project Consultation held at Cambridge University 7-9 April 1998, “It is very important to understand that although a great deal of the scientific evidence brought to support Social Darwinism and scientific racism between the 1850s and the 1920s is now referred to as pseudo-science, it was propounded by the leading scientists and thinkers of the day.” p. 8 Some westerners who seemed to be exceptions to this general attitude were, Joseph Booth, Roland Allen, Arthur S. Cripps, and William Morrison.

The colonial government of Kenya was clearly racially motivated in rejecting the Yergans' visa applications for re-entry to East Africa. After WWI, in a letter dated 24 September 1920, Governor Northey of Kenya Colony wrote to the YMCA concerning Yergan's visa application:

I confess that I was surprised at your suggestion to send an American Negro for work among the African natives. Honestly I think you will be making a mistake if you do so. The race problem here, with Europeans, Indians, Arabs and many different African native tribes is already very complicated and I fear that the introduction of an American Negro for work among any of them would not be welcome to the different communities here.²²

It is interesting to note that this ban on 'Negro' missionaries did not just apply to African American missionaries, but virtually any missionaries who were not white. This presented a whole new set of difficulties according to Coryndon, Northey's replacement as governor of Kenya, who wrote:

For the present at least, passports should not be issued to negro British subjects to enable them to proceed to Kenya for missionary work. As regards the refusal of a passport to a British subject, I feel bound to say that I think that considerable difficulties might arise in practice.²³

Following WWI even German missionaries were not refused access to East Africa by the British colonial government. Coryndon states:

I note from Your Grace's despatch, Miscellaneous of the 14th December that no special legislation is to be introduced to govern the entry of missionaries into Kenya, and from Your Grace's Circular despatch of the 8th November

²² Governor Northey to Major Oliver H. McGowen of the International Branch of the YMCA in London, Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, London (hereafter cited as PRO) 24 September 1920. CO 533/293. For a further explanation of Yergan's visa difficulties and a general understanding of the politics of education used by the colonial government at that time see King, *Pan-Africanism and Education* (Oxford, 1971) 58-94, chapter 3, entitled 'East Africa, Pan-Africanism and the American Negro before the Phelps-Stokes Commission.' Also see King's article 'The American Negro as Missionary to East Africa: A Critical Aspect of African Evangelism' in *African Historical Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1970), 5-22.

²³ Coryndon to Bottomley, 19 February 1923, PRO, CO 533/293.

that individual missionaries of ex-enemy alien nationality are not to be subjected to absolute exclusion.²⁴

Coryndon goes on to suggest that the exclusion of 'negro British citizens' be applied not just to Kenya but to all the East African Dependencies if Strachey of Tanganyika agreed. Strachey's response is hand-written at the bottom of Coryndon's letter and shows the complex nature of this decision.

I do not agree to the automatic application of this Kenya ruling to Tanganyika and Nyasaland. It was decided that Kenya should receive exceptional treatment in this matter of negro missionaries who are British Subjects. It is now proposed to extend this to negro missionaries who are not British Subjects. There seems to me to be no reason whatever to apply this (and the first ruling as well) to Territories which were excluded from the exceptional treatment given to Kenya. Liberia and Haiti are members of the League of Nations and we can't introduce a colour bar into a mandated territory. Nyasaland, which is quoted in this despatch as a reason for the restriction, has not asked for it, and prefers to rely on the existing law against stirring up of trouble.²⁵

The British colonial government, fearing potential repercussions in the League of Nations, was unwilling to make a legislative decision color barring African American missionaries from entering Kenya. Instead, it chose to let the western missionary societies enforce the ban. According to British colonial office correspondence with J.H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and Fennel Turner, secretary of the American Conference of Missionary Societies, when asked to help exclude African American missionaries from Kenya they were quite willing to assist. A note of a meeting between the colonial office and

²⁴ Coryndon to Devonshire, 19 February 1923, PRO, CO 533/293.

²⁵ C. Strachey note hand-written at the bottom of Coryndon's despatch to Bottomley 19 February 1923, PRO, CO 533/293.

Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council which grew out of the 1910 Edinburgh conference on World Missions, states:

Confirms telegram of 16th January. Comments as to undesirability of admission of negro missionaries. Subject to this considers Govt. of India restrictions sufficient safeguard. You and I saw Mr. Oldham about this on Thursday morning—

(I) We explained to him the Governors desire to exclude Negro Missionaries, and as we anticipated, we found him quite sympathetic. He thought however that a wide distinction should be drawn between negroes trained at Tuskegee or under Booker Washington influences, and those trained in schools in which the Christianity taught was purely of the Psalm singing prayer-meeting variety:

It being agreed that it was desirable to exclude Negro Missionaries from Kenya for the present, we next discussed how this could best be done, and it was agreed that it would be much better to leave it to the Missionary Societies themselves rather than to have recourse to Government action. Mr. Oldham was confident that Mr. Turner, the Secretary of the American Conference of Missionary Societies, if approached diplomatically, would damp down any movement in the direction of sending Negro Missionaries to East Africa.²⁶

What, exactly Coryndon meant by the 'Psalm singing prayer meeting variety' is never made clear. But what is clear is that he preferred the 'negroes trained at Tuskegee' and this became a standard intended to exclude all applicants unable to pass the scrutiny of Oldham, the IMC and the British colonial government.

There were other issues besides race that affected the British Colonial Office's decisions concerning granting visas to African Americans. It sought to ban the influx of African American literature like the *Negro World* published by Marcus

²⁶ Coryndon to Bottomley, 19 February 1923, PRO, CO 533/293. There were two schools of education in the African American community at this time. The DuBois school which followed an academic curriculum and the Washington school which followed an industrial or vocational training curriculum. However, Coryndon's reference to two schools in this quote, one being the Tuskegee type and the other the 'Psalm singing prayer-meeting variety,' does not appear to be a reference to the DuBois/Washington debate that was begun carried on in mission circles at this time.

Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). This is confirmed in a letter from Oldham to Turner in the USA:

When I was at the Colonial office the other day my attention was directed to difficulties which the Government is having with undesirable propaganda of the Marcus Garvey type. In considering the steps necessary to deal with these difficulties the question arises of the admission of negro missionaries...I suggested that, as the question was coming up for consideration at the meeting of the International Missionary Council next July, definite action might be held over till then.²⁷

As Oldham suggests, the issue of African American missionaries was raised at the July 9-16, 1923 meeting of the International Missionary Council at Oxford. The following resolution was adopted by the meeting concerning African American missionaries:

The Council is of [the] opinion that both in order to meet the need of African peoples and as an outlet for the missionary zeal and an expression of the missionary responsibility of the negro communities in the United States and other countries outside of the African continent, opportunity should be given to Christian negroes in these countries, who are qualified for such service, to share in the evangelization and education of the peoples of Africa and elsewhere.

In view of the political and social difficulties, greater in some parts of the continent than others, in the way of giving effect to this policy and of the trying and exacting conditions under which negro missionaries will in most cases have to work, the Council believes that special care should be exercised in the selection, training and testing of such missionaries in order that those missionaries who go out may by proving their fitness bring about the opening of the doors more widely. It is further the conviction of the Council that to secure the best results from the sending out of negro missionaries it is desirable that all possible help, co-operation and sympathy be extended to them by their white colleagues.

In as much as negro missionaries from outside Africa will in most cases be working as aliens under foreign governments, this circumstance should receive careful consideration by the bodies sending them and by the negro missionaries themselves, who should recognize the necessity of maintaining

²⁷ J.H. Oldham to Fennel Turner, 27 March 1923, PRO, CO 533/293.

that scrupulous loyalty to the governing power which is expected by government in many existing regulations. Close attention to this matter is in the view of the Council an indispensable condition of the successful carrying out of the desired policy.

The following took part in the discussion: Dr. Ritson, Mr. Turner, Mr. Oldham, Dr. Strong, Dr. Berry, Mr. Gibson and Dr. Corey.²⁸

The emphasis of this resolution appears to be that only specially selected African American missionaries were to be allowed to enter British colonial Africa. It can only be speculated as to what the specifications were for selection, but if the absence of African American missionaries in most parts of colonial Africa after this conference was any indication then it can be assumed that few were able to meet them. It may be further indicated that these standards were an indirect way of saying “no applications are being taken at this time.” In addition, the importance of the loyalty to the colonial governments of the areas they served was emphasized in this resolution. This was most likely a reference to the Garvey movement that was very active at the time.

²⁸ *Minutes of the Committee of the International Missionary Council*, held at Oxford, England, July 9-16, 1923 (London: Edinburgh House, 1923), 35,36. On page 12 under the title ‘Admission of Negro Missionaries to Africa’ it states that ‘Mr. Turner read a paper, the result of the work of a Committee appointed by the Committee of Reference and Counsel, embodying the views of various American missionaries and Board secretaries regarding the advisability of employing American negroes and American-trained Africans as missionaries in Africa.’ Also on page 14 it states, ‘On the recommendation of the Business Committee Mr. Kamba Simango was called into the meeting and gave a brief address on the subject under consideration. An appeal addressed to the World Student Christian Federation from a Conference of African and American Negroes held at Tuskegee was presented by the Chairman, and remitted to the Business Committee for consideration.’ This document and the address by Simango would also be helpful to see but after a search of the World Council of Churches archives in Geneva on 28 July 1997, no background information was available in the minute files for this meeting. However, other papers presented to the conference were present in this file. The absence of these papers on African Americans could indicate that the issue of African American missionaries lacked importance or maybe the topic was considered too sensitive to leave in the Council’s files. It appears that Oldham and Turner wanted the issue on the agenda, even though they had already negotiated the real decision with the Colonial Office.

Garvey's movement had as one of its Pan-African goals, the mass repatriation of African Americans to Africa. Following the arrest of Kenyan nationalist Harry Thuku in 1922, it was discovered that he had received "much of the American Negro literature and propaganda coming to Uganda."²⁹ The presence of this literature reminded some Kenya colonial officials of the Chilembwe uprising in Nyasaland in 1915, in which African American missionaries and literature were implicated by the Commission of Inquiry. This Commission's final report stated:

The only kind of literature which seems to have affected the movement apart from Joseph Booth's petition of May 1914 sent for circulation, and to some extent circulated, among Nyasaland natives, was in our opinion a class of American negro publications imported by Chilembwe the tendency of which was to inflame racial feelings.³⁰

Events like the arrest of Thuku contributed to the collective paranoia of colonial officials and caused them to remember the connection between the uprising in Nyasaland and African American missionaries even though the last African American missionary had departed Nyasaland in 1907, eight years before the rising. A letter from Kenya governor Coryndon to Devonshire, Secretary of State for the

²⁹ King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, 69. Ugandans attending Tuskegee like Danieri Kato in 1920, sent African American literature to the Young Baganda Association that was then passed on to Kenyan's like Harry Thuku. Also see Richard G. Weisbord, 'Africa, Africans and the Afro-American: Images and Identities in Transition', *Race*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1969, 309, where he states, 'George Alexander McGuire, a former Episcopal minister and ardent Garveyite, [was] accused by British of being instigator of Mau Mau. William Daniel Alexander was also accused. He was primate of the African Orthodox Church in the 1930s. Thurgood Marshall [Lawyer and later the first African American Supreme Court Justice in the USA] acted as legal advisor [for the Kenyan nationalists] to the Lancaster House Conference.' This shows that the reconnection between East Africa and African Americans continued after the YMCA secretaries left East Africa in 1919.

³⁰ *Report of The Commission on The Native Rising within The Nyasaland Protectorate*, Government Printer, Nyasaland, 1915. A copy of this report is located in the George Shepperson papers, Edinburgh University Library. See also Shepperson and Price *Independent African* (Edinburgh, 1958), for a detailed evaluation of the Chilembwe Uprising.

Colonies, revealed a strong connection, in his own mind, between the arrest of Thuku in 1922 and the Chilembwe uprising in 1915:

I am strongly averse from allowing any opportunity for the introduction or propagation of the undesirable doctrines which culminated in disturbances in Nyasaland during the war. Last year's events in Nairobi proved that inflammable material existed amongst the local native communities.³¹

The 'last year's events' mentioned in this letter, dated 23 July 1923, was most certainly the arrest of Thuku in Nairobi. This quote brings up the point that it was generally difficult for colonial officials to make any distinction in the diversity of political views among African American missionaries or their literature. To colonial officials, they generally spelled trouble for the status quo.

Surprisingly, the unwritten policy decision to color bar African American missionaries was tested shortly after it was made when in 1923, James E.K. Aggrey, a Ghanaian, applied for a visa to accompany the second Phelps-Stokes Fund Commission on Education in Africa. In a letter to Oldham concerning Aggrey's visit, Bottomley wrote for the Governor, "The Governor is in no way averse from the best type of negro missionary (e.g. the "Tuskegee" type) entering Kenya and, as he said at the meeting, would welcome Mr. Aggrey's accompanying Dr. Jesse Jones and Dr. Garfield Williams on their proposed visit to Kenya."³²

³¹ R.T. Coryndon, Governor of Kenya Colony to Devonshire, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 February 1923. PRO, CO 533/293. Gov. Coryndon's reference to the disturbance in Nyasaland during the war probably refers to the uprising that occurred at the Providence Industrial Mission headed by Rev. John Chilembwe in 1915. Shepperson and Price state in *Independent African*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1958), 93-94, 'The Commission of Inquiry into the Rising linked the American Negro to it in two ways: first, by indicating that one of its causes was, 'the political notions imbibed by Chilembwe...during his education in the United States in a Negro Baptist seminary'—and secondly, by claiming that the movement had been affected by 'a class of American Negro publications imported by Chilembwe, the tendency of which was to inflame racial feeling.'

Aggrey had spent twenty years studying and teaching in various American schools none of which fit the Tuskegee mold of industrial and agricultural training. However, the allowing of Aggrey to enter Kenya does prove that at least one exception was made to this ruling. This flexibility to pick and choose those acceptable for entry was most likely the reason for this policy to begin with. In a letter from Coryndon concerning his meeting with Oldham and Turner he states:

Mr. Turner offered (i) in the case of recognised Societies to let them know that negro missionaries were not wanted in Kenya and (ii) suggested, in the case of unrecognized societies, that applications on behalf of negro missionaries, should in the case of Kenya be turned down by the Passport Control offices and if trouble arose, that we should definitely take the line that such unrecognized societies could not be regarded as equal to the responsibility of looking after negro missionaries.³³

The idea of 'looking after negro missionaries' brings up once again the issue of supervision. Many colonial officials seemed to feel that Africans and African Americans were incapable of supervising themselves. It seems ironic that western mission agencies also shared this attitude with the colonial government and although their goal was to spread the gospel in Africa they were willing to assist the colonial governments in blocking the entry of African American missionaries who shared their same goal.³⁴ This seems a poor use of their mission resources. However, it

³² Bottomley to Oldham, 21 July 1923, PRO, CO 533/305. The 'Tuskegee type' of missionary is probably a reference to Booker T. Washington views that African Americans indeed needed to accept segregation as their plight and seek to make the most of where they were. His famous Atlanta Exposition speech and his illustration of the 'glove and the hand' and 'drop you buckets where you are' was seen as 'selling out' by many African Americans like W.E.B. DuBois (see footnote 106 for quote by DuBois) and at the same time seen by many whites like Thomas Jesse Jones, of the Phelps Stokes Fund, as evidence of what a 'Good Negro' was supposed to say. Obviously Governor Coryndon was interested in the latter and saw Aggrey as a 'Tuskegee type' who knew his place and would not seek to upset the status quo by asking to be treated as an equal.

³³ Coryndon to Sir H. Read, 17 July 1923, PRO, CO 533/305.

should be noted that well educated African American missionaries not only represented a threat to the status quo of the colonial governments, but also to the missions already operating in East Africa.

There was no lack of sceptics among European missionaries concerning the capabilities of African American missionaries. The Hemans who served under the London Missionary Society (LMS) were informed before even arriving at their station near Lake Tanganyika that some of their co-workers opposed their coming on purely racial grounds.³⁵

By the time African American missionaries went to East Africa they were not naive about the racial situation there. They may have been hopeful for a better day to come, but the reality of racial prejudice was ever before them. As William Simons sailed on a boat from New York, he was confided in by a white passenger from Kentucky who was going to Rhodesia to work in the mines:

Before he realized it he was telling me how innocent Negroes were set upon and lynched for no other reason than that they were educated or had a good job or valuable property, etc., etc. Usually a woman was employed to butt, 'into' him as they passed on the street and that was taken as a sufficient pretext for murder.³⁶

³⁴ It is little wonder that Kenyan nationalist, Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom* (Nairobi: 1975), 47, states, 'I personally take the missionaries as a colonial government arm for recruiting labour. The education we get only fits us to be 'obedient servants of the white government.' The missionaries do not educate Africans out of love but as a service to their government.' There are probably many examples of missionaries that both support Kaggia's view and refute it but it is understandable why he said it.

³⁵ Hemans to Thompson, general secretary of London Missionary Society, 6 January 1892, Council for World Mission, School of Oriental and African Studies archive, London, (hereafter cited as CWM, SOAS) Central Africa files, microfiche 124.

³⁶ Simons, diary, 3 April 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

Upon arrival in South Africa, Simons and Walter P. Stanley another African American along with a Jewish family were the only ones detained on board the ship. No explanation was given, but Simons attributed this to racial prejudice.³⁷

While in South Africa Simons recorded in his diary the all too familiar stories of how, “...wanton killings of Negroes had been excused at court on the grounds that the murdered were invalids and shooting only hastened their end; that one native was shot because he owned and was riding a fine stallion; that a married woman was shot because she made that her reason for refusing a white man.”³⁸

As Simons and Stanley made their way among the people in South Africa they heard a significant story from some Zulus they met. Simons recorded this meeting in his diary entry of 30 April 1918, “Zulus in the quarters told Stanley that they expected the colored Americans to fight against Britain rather than with her and that if they (the Americans) had done so they (the Africans) would have done the same.”³⁹ Early encounters like these must have removed any doubts in their minds about the racial climate in Africa.

W.E.B. DuBois expressed the hope held by many in 1903 for a solution to the race problem. “The race problem will be solved when Christianity gains control of the innate wickedness of the human heart, and men learn to apply in dealing with their fellows the simple principles of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the

³⁷ Simons, diary, 12 April 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC. See footnote 16 of this chapter for examples of Cheek’s, Delaney’s, and the Branches’ treatment by customs officials upon entering Africa. These would tend to support Simons’ assessment of his delay.

³⁸ Simons, diary, 10 May 1918, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC.

³⁹ Simons, diary, 30 April 1918, William Simons papers, LOC.

Mount.”⁴⁰ However, there was little hope in Simons’ writings that by leaving the USA he would be able to avoid racism.

Paradoxically, there seems to have been a recurring perception among African American throughout American history that getting back to Africa would provide relief from racial oppression in the USA. This led to various emigration movements focused primarily on Liberia. There appears to be a correlation between the rise of ‘back to Africa’ movements and times of great racial oppression in the USA. Whether hopes for a better future were dashed by the continuance of slavery, the institution of ‘Jim Crow’ laws, race riots or the lynching of African American soldiers returning from WWI, these events caused many African Americans to look to Africa as a refuge. However, most educated African Americans knew that the racial situation in colonial Africa was hardly better than it was in the USA and the majority of these African American missionaries to East Africa were well educated.⁴¹

⁴⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), 208. DuBois was not generally known for his positive sentiments towards Christianity. This quote may reveal an early DuBois who was then more positive.

⁴¹ For a further explanation of this phenomenon see Bayard Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2-4. Rustin says, ‘The point is that those periods which saw the rise of the ideologies of hopelessness were precisely the periods when past achievements were blunted, when a hard-won consensus of support was diminished, and when confusion, aimlessness, and disarray had replaced unity and purposefulness....Like Washington before him, Garvey rose to prominence at a time when it was becoming increasingly obvious that the rising expectations of Negroes were about to be shattered. For Washington, that time was the acknowledged end of Reconstruction, when the freedman was disenfranchised, deprived of his social and economic rights, and stripped of what he thought to be the legitimate legacy of emancipation. For Garvey, the time was the period immediately after World War I, when returning black troops discovered that making the world safe for democracy did not automatically signal the spread of democracy at home.’

If anything, by going to East Africa as missionaries, they were going to a place where their education and missionary calling would cause them to be watched even more closely than if they were in the USA. As Landon Cheek wrote in 1940:

My English friends (?) were eyeing me as a veritable hornet who within thirty years would incite the natives against English rule. To the last day of our long and weary years they tried to 'trump' my every move, even to build up our station, hoping that any day I would be discouraged and return to U.S.A.⁴²

Although the idea of going to Liberia to escape racism in America may have motivated some African American missionaries, it was not a motivating factor for those going to East Africa.

Emigrants or Missionaries?

The issue of whether or not African American missionaries sought to emigrate from the USA must be evaluated by their behavior once they arrived in East Africa. This behavior showed their real intent to establish bonafide residency.

Landon N. Cheek, who went to Nyasaland in 1901, had every intention of emigrating when he left the USA according to the memory of one of his relatives.⁴³ Cheek went to Nyasaland as a single missionary and shortly after arriving, married Rachel Chimpere, the niece of John Chilembwe. They had three children during his

⁴² Landon N. Cheek, 'Reminiscences of A Missionary,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 4, September-October 1940, 18. It should be noted that Cheek wrote this over 30 years after returning from Nyasaland.

⁴³ Interview with Mrs. Margaret Durham, the great-granddaughter of Landon Cheek, on 7 January 1997. Durham is in the process of writing a biography on Cheek.

seven years in Nyasaland. It should be noted that if a white missionary had married and African he would have most certainly been disciplined by his mission board. In fact in some places it was entirely illegal.⁴⁴

Cheek's initial behavior would appear to be that of a prototypical emigrant/missionary. Thirty years after his return to the USA from Nyasaland, Cheek was still encouraging others to consider emigration to Africa. He states, "There is no need for us to remain in economic, mental and physical slavery while such a beautiful spot beckons our coming. If the powers that be can urge a homeland for Jewish refugees, we as Afro-Americans should see in time where we can plant our feet on solid ground in our own motherland."⁴⁵ Although Cheek was generally positive about emigration, his letters from Nyasaland did not always reflect this. He wrote in one letter to his mission board:

Sorry to say, in general the crops are poor and as a result of same a famine has been on. Thus you will see how very necessary it is that our brethren in America send us money to help relieve the situation and keep things on foot. All of us have been sick, very sick, and I thought at one time we would lose both of our babies, also Brother Chilembwe, but God is very near and says, "live on". I hope to start to America in June.⁴⁶

The harsh realities of living in British Central Africa, seemed to have shaken Cheek's resolve about emigrating to Africa. Possibly he concluded, as Booker T. Washington

⁴⁴ According to the Register of Marriages ruling it was illegal for a European to marry an African. See John McCracken, 'Marginal Men,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, October 1989, 557. Malawian Frederick Njilima's letter of proposal to an English woman was intercepted by colonial censors. Contrast this with African American missionary Cheek whose marriage to Malawian Rachel Chimpere was blessed by his mission board.

⁴⁵ Landon Cheek, 'Reminiscences of a Missionary,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 4, September/October 1940, 18.

⁴⁶ Landon N. Cheek, *MH*, vol. 11, no. 5, May 1907, 2. Letter reprinted from Cheek to the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, 20 February 1907.

did, that although his heart was for building up Africa he could do more from the USA.⁴⁷

Emma B. Delaney's frequent letters to Spelman College, Atlanta and to the National Baptist Convention were published and used to enlist aid for her work.⁴⁸

Willie Mae Ashley, Delaney's biographer, states that there was little doubt in Delaney's mind that being a missionary was her life's calling. She states of Delaney, "There was never, never a minute of doubt in her mind about accepting 'the call' to go on this missionary journey. That 'call' had come to her long, long ago as a child."⁴⁹ The title of the book written about Miss Delaney, *Far From Home*, indicates that she saw herself as a missionary and not as an emigrant to Nyasaland.

The idea of African American emigration to Africa was also an interest of some European missionaries as well. Joseph Booth, an Englishman, who worked with the Branches, felt strongly about the injustices done to Africans. He was concerned about the alienation of land, hut taxes, and forced labor that the indigenous

⁴⁷ Booker T. Washington to Joseph Booth, 13 November 1913, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 12, 1912-1914, eds. Louis R. Beach and Raymond W. Smock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 312. Portions of this letter are quoted later in this chapter. Washington had once thought he would be a missionary to Africa but finally concluded that he could accomplish more for Africa by helping train in general missionaries in America.

⁴⁸ E.B. Delaney letters published in the *Spelman Messenger*, November 1902, 5; March 1903, 2; November 1903, 7; January 1904, 7; April 1916, 7; November 1916, 8; May 1919, 2; October 1922, 4, and minutes of the annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention 1905, 36; 1904, 74; 1912, 142; *MH* magazine of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, August 1905, p. 1. It was the Women's Auxiliary of the Florida Baptist Convention that partially supported Delaney's missionary work to Nyasaland.

⁴⁹ Willie May Hardy Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach: Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, 1987), 10.

people of Nyasaland experienced at the hands of Europeans. He wrote in his short booklet, *Africa for the African*:

We the undersigned do hereby solemnly vow before God and men to devote our lives and substance to the uplifting of the African race as follows: 1st—By the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the continent of Africa: 2nd—By the restoration of the land of Africa to the African people: 3rd—By the restoration of the Negroes to the fatherland from which they were stolen.⁵⁰

Booth, a one time Baptist, Seventh Day Baptist, Seventh-day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witness, had an attitude towards Africa almost a hundred years ahead of its time. Many of his views would fit in the mission journals of the late twentieth century, but they were not well received at its beginning. Even Booker T. Washington admired Booth's stand for justice for the African. However, being the realist that he was, he wrote to Booth, in 1913, explaining to him the impracticality of his third point concerning emigration:

I do not believe it possible, however, to induce any considerable number of American Negroes to emigrate to Africa as long as conditions are as you describe them. In my opinion, the introduction of another alien element into South Africa would only increase the present irritation and make conditions worse.

The Negroes of America regard this country as their home and are convinced that they are better off here than they would be in any other part of the world. For that reason, they have no desire to emigrate.

⁵⁰ Joseph Booth, *Africa for the African*, (n.p., n.d. [probably published before 1897 when a second edition was printed]), 13. This book was published during on of Booth's visit to the USA and is dedicated 'First to Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, Second to the British and American Christian People, and Third and Specially to the Afro-American People of the United States of America.' Copies may be found in the Shepperson Papers, Special Collections Library, University of Edinburgh and in the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. A full copy is reprinted in the most recent biography on Booth entitled, *Africa for the African: The Life of Joseph Booth*, (Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 1996) by the late Harry Langworthy, great-grandson of Joseph Booth. Portions of Booth's papers are in the Special Collections Library, University of Edinburgh.

Let me assure you that I wish you every success in the work you are doing to secure justice for the African people. My task is here but my heart is with you in your work in Africa.⁵¹

As different solutions to the 'race problem' in America occurred to political and religious leaders the idea of sending large numbers of African Americans back to Africa or to South America regularly recurred.⁵² However, for various reasons African Americans never left the USA in the large numbers that some had hoped for.

Of the missionaries who did go to East Africa, the Hemans served 18 years before they retired to Jamaica. The seven YMCA secretaries who went to East Africa each signed a standard contract with the YMCA before leaving the USA. This contract required each secretary to agree to, "Continuance in this service for duration of war, provided his services are required for that period by the International Committee YMCA".⁵³ Since the war only lasted four years, all but two of the secretaries left the YMCA after the war was over with four or less years of service. Of the other two, Yergan continued in South Africa until 1936 and Simons continued in India and Burma until 1924 and then went to Nigeria with the Southern Baptists until his death in 1938.

African American missionaries to East Africa generally saw themselves as distinct from the local people with clear ties to their home communities in the USA.

⁵¹ Booker T. Washington to Joseph Booth, 13 November 1913, in *The Booker T Washington Papers*, vol. 14, (Urbana: 1982), 331. The entire B.T. Washington papers are in the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The National Library of Scotland has a complete 14 volume set of the published papers.

⁵² See chapter 1 for an explanation of the colonization movement in America in the 19th century.

⁵³ A copy of this contract is available in William Simons papers, box 5, LOC.

Unlike some African American missionaries to Liberia, emigration was not a significant motivating factor for the majority of African American missionaries to East Africa.

'Pan-Africanist' or 'Cultural Imperialist?'

Pan-Africanism for the purpose of this research may be regarded as the view of African ancestry as a world-wide connector of Africans both on the continent and in the Diaspora. Contrasted with this is the definition of cultural imperialism which for the purpose of this research is the imposition of one's own culture upon another. At first glance these two views might seem so far apart that there is no possibility of any overlap. Early twentieth century events as seen through late twentieth century eyes are much more likely to be sensitive to acculturation or the imposition of one culture upon another. As worthy as the cause of cultural sensitivity might seem in the twentieth century, the twenty-first century may well reveal the narrowness of our current worldviews and give some future historian opportunity to judge us. Therefore, we should not be too quick to judge African American missionaries records of cultural intolerance.

African American missionaries were sometimes bold about proclaiming their western culture as superior. They thought it was important for the African's welfare that they transplant a portion of western culture with the gospel that they preached. What they did not realize then and would probably never have admitted is that by connecting the gospel to their western cultural standards they were making it difficult

for the people they wanted to reach to accept it. They would probably have been revolted by the very name “cultural imperialist” even though it fits some of what they did as missionaries. However, it was their behavior which must be evaluated regardless of what they might have said or wished to the contrary. As Sandy Martin, African American historian, writes of these missionaries, “If they accepted American ethnocentrism they rejected both racism and slavery as inconsistent with Christian Faith and the dignity and worth of their persons.”⁵⁴ Their understanding of the gospel was no doubt affected by their experiences just as all missionaries were. However, Martin suggests that there was a partial rejection of western culture by African American missionaries. They refused to export the racial views of the west, but chose to see the Africans as brethren.

William H. Sheppard, African American missionary with the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) to the Congo from 1889-1909 had an experience that supports this idea and reveals a common experience of affinity with the indigenous people. His account of a meeting with a Bakuba chief is of interest:

I leaned from my seat forward toward King Lukenga and getting his attention said briefly, “I understand, King, that your people believe me to be a Makuba who once lived here.” The king replied with a smile, “Ni Gaxa Mi” (It is true). “I want to acknowledge to you,” said I, “that I am not a Makuba and I have never been here before.” The king leaned over the arm of his great chair and said with satisfaction, “You don’t know it but you are. ‘Muana Mi’”(one of the family).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Sandy D. Martin, ‘Black Baptists, Foreign Missions, and African Colonization, 1814-1882,’ in *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*, ed. Sylvia M. Jacobs (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 73.

⁵⁵ William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in the Congo* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, n.d.), 107,108. The Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, North Carolina, has a large amount of material on Sheppard and the other African American missionaries who served in the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern Presbyterian) mission to Kasai in Congo.

There are many factors involved in the spread of Christianity and regardless of whether or not African American missionaries failed to be culturally sensitive, the fact that Christianity continued to spread in East Africa is irrefutable. However, this spread may have been more due to the attractiveness of the message rather than to the attractiveness of the messengers. African American missionaries, like all missionaries in varying degrees, cloaked the message of the gospel in their own cultural contexts.

Tom Mboya, former Kenya Minister of Economic Development, said in a 1969 article concerning the repatriation of African Americans to Kenya, “What is unrealistic about the proposal is the ease with which some black Americans think that they can throw off their American culture and become African.”⁵⁶ He states that becoming a part of Kenyan culture was not just a matter of growing a beard and wearing sandals and a dashiki, but rather:

Our culture is something much deeper. It is the sum of our personality and our attitude toward life. The basic qualities that distinguish it are our extended family ties and the codes governing relations between old and young, our concept of mutual social responsibility and communal activities, our sense of humor, our belief in a supreme being and our ceremonies for birth, marriage and death.⁵⁷

It is interesting to note that many of the issues Mboya uses to define his culture, like the strength of extended family relationships and community responsibility and

⁵⁶ Tom Mboya, ‘The American Negro Cannot Look to Africa for an Escape,’ *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 July 1969, 38. This article was written just before Mboya’s assassination in Kenya on 5 July 1969. Although this article was written long after the period of this research it is helpful in defining the cultural issues that these early missionaries faced.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

activities, were the very things that slavery tried to destroy. Mboya rightly points out that it was unrealistic to expect missionaries raised in an individualistic western society to easily exchange their way of thinking for the more communal societies of East Africa.

A final statement by Mboya brings out an important point concerning the Western tendency to see Africa as monocultural rather than the tremendously diverse continent that it is:

Some of the Afro-Americans who spoke to me were angry that our Government had rejected a motion calling for automatic citizenship for any black American who wished to come to settle in Kenya. The point here is a legal one. The point is that even Africans coming from neighboring states cannot acquire automatic citizenship.⁵⁸

Mboya's words are relevant to the question of cultural imperialism and raise the important point that Africans could also be culturally imperialistic toward other Africa cultures. African American missionaries struggled with cultural imperialism during their time in East Africa, in part, because much of their perception of Africa was based on a lack of or faulty information before they arrived.⁵⁹ This is why firsthand experiences in East Africa brought changes in their perception.

W.E.B DuBois may not have coined the phrase 'Pan-African' but he certainly did all he could to develop it. But, even he showed some degree of cultural preference when he states his view of what a "civilized" African was. He wrote the following statement in the resolution of the Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919:

⁵⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁹ See statement by Booker T. Washington in footnote 2 of Introduction.

Wherever persons of African descent are civilized and able to meet the tests of surrounding culture, they shall be accorded the same rights as their fellow-citizens: they shall not be denied on account of race or color a voice in their own government, justice before the courts, and economic and social equality according to ability and deserts.⁶⁰

It should be understood that DuBois and the other Africanists at the Pan-African Congress were doing their best to see that the rights of the African were protected. This is clearly stated at the end of their resolution:

Whenever it is proven that African Natives are not receiving just treatment at the hands of any State or that any State deliberately excludes its civilized citizens or subjects of Negro descent from its body politic and cultural, it shall be the duty of the League of Nations to bring the matter to the attention of the civilized world.⁶¹

Du Bois, like most African Americans of that time, probably found it difficult to totally understand and relate to Africa's diversity due to his western cultural bias.

However, Liberian scholar, Edward Wilmot Blyden, probably understood Africa's diversity even better than DuBois. Nonetheless he also was committed to a Pan-African ideal as is indicated in this letter to Booker T. Washington congratulating him on his acclaimed Atlanta Exposition Speech of 1895:

p.s. You will permit me to say that I am particularly pleased that you did not introduce the word "Afro-American", as descriptive of the race in so important and dignified a public document. That word excludes in discussing race questions, the whole of the people of the Fatherland. It excludes me. It limits all views and discussions of the race question. It is narrow and provincial and not a statesmanlike word. I am glad to see that Southern leaders of the race, as a rule, ignore that word.⁶²

⁶⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, 'The Pan-African Congress,' *Crisis*, vol. 17, no. 6, April 1919, 274. The resolution goes on to state that 'No particular religion shall be imposed and no particular form of human culture. There shall be liberty of conscience.' Much depends on the interpretation of culture to understand how this was to be applied.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

As this comment by Blyden indicates, the idea of Pan-Africanism was considered by both Africans and African Americans. Their futures were inseparably tied to each other by a common heritage and race. As Mboya stated in his article, “We cannot survive as free nations if there is any part of the world in which people of African descent are degraded.”⁶³ For African Americans to be comfortable in their prosperity while others suffered from racial oppression was unacceptable.

How did African American missionaries balance their cultural preferences and their worldviews of Pan-Africanism? They clearly had strong religious motivations for becoming missionaries as has already been shown. They detested things like human sacrifice to appease the spirits of the land or to make rain fall. They were appalled by the way women were treated and were horrified by the continued presence of the slavetrade even as late as the turn of the twentieth century. The gospel they brought to East Africa could only conflict with cultural practices like these.

Each missionary brought to East Africa a particular perception of Africa which was formed earlier in the USA. This perception was based on what they had read and heard about Africa. Since none of them had actually ever been there before it was the best that they could do to form an image of what Africa was like by comparing it with what they were culturally familiar with in their own country.

⁶² Edward W. Blyden to Booker T. Washington, 24 September 1895, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 4, eds. Louis Beach and Raymond Smock (Urbana: 1975), 28.

⁶³ Mboya, ‘The American Negro,’ 32. This was a reference to South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique which at that time (1969) were still ruled by oppressive white minorities.

However, after having a firsthand experience in East Africa, African American missionaries were influenced in their understanding of Africa. This reconnection changed them for the rest of their lives and made them change agents to varying degrees with their people at home.

Were African American missionaries ‘cultural imperialists’ or ‘pan-africanists’? The answer is that to some degree they were both. They balanced these two views precariously and found, surprisingly, little difficulty in living with their contradictions.

Impact on the peoples of Africa

Although the primary focus of this research is the impact African American missionaries had on the African American community, it is important at this point to look at how they were perceived by the East Africans themselves. Kenyan nationalist Bildad Kaggia, describes his first contact with an African American during WWII:

Another doctor, an American Negro, was posted to our unit. He was the first American Negro to whom I had really talked and for the first time I heard the story of the American slaves from the descendant of one taken to America many years ago. It was a great experience and an eye opener for me and the other African soldiers. We had always been told, and almost believed that Africans were not fit to be commissioned....In addition this doctor was very much interested in Africans and was keen to make friends with us.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 26. Although Kaggia writes years after the period of this research his first encounter with an African American is helpful in speculating on the impact of earlier encounters for which there is little recorded material. Kaggia concludes his impressions of this encounter, ‘But the days discussion left a strong impression on my mind. I consider it the beginning of my political consciousness.’ p. 27

What became evident to Kaggia in his encounter was that the basic difference between the African American he met and himself was their levels of education. He goes on to state about the importance of education, "People needed to be told that Africans were equal to whites, that Africans given education and opportunity were capable of doing everything that the *mzungu* could do."⁶⁵ In no other area did the East African and the African American agree more than that education, according to the needs and abilities of the people, was the key to their development.

Simbini Nkomo, a South African and faculty member at Tuskegee Institute, wrote in 1923 of the exchange of African Americans and Africans:

Through the help of the African Student conferences, many African students have been influenced to take up medical, agricultural, educational, theological, and industrial courses to meet the needs of the native tribes of Africa. Through the appeal of African students to the American people for the needs of Christianity many American Negro students have decided to spend their lives in Africa doing missionary work among their own people.⁶⁶

Nkomo's views seem to indicate that Africans should come to the USA for educational purposes and African American missionaries should take Christianity to Africa. In reality African American missionaries saw both education and Christian practice as central to the gospel they took to East Africa. If Africans like Nkomo saw a need for African American missionaries to go to Africa and provide education about Christ, others like Thuku saw their coming as a key element in helping liberate Africans from the oppression of the white settler. In a letter from Thuku to Tuskegee

⁶⁵ Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1975), 65. *Mzungu* is the KiSwahili word for white person.

⁶⁶ Simbini Mamba Nkomo, 'The African Student Union,' *The Student World*, vol. 16, no. 2, April 1923, 57.

Institute the mixture of education, mission and liberation is evident. Thuku wrote on 8 September 1921:

I am therefore anxious to be informed if a Booker T. Washington or a DuBois can be spared for founding a 'Tuskegee' in the African wilds and for the holy Mission of up-lifting and emancipating the hopeless, hapless, struggling 3,000,000 nude Native souls from deep ignorance, abject poverty, and grinding oppression of the white settlers of this Colony of Kenya.⁶⁷

Thuku had received African American literature, like Garvey's *Negro World* and DuBois' *Crisis*, which contained information about schools like Tuskegee Institute and Hampton Institute. It was clear that Thuku knew of the educational/missionary methods of these schools and thought they would help to liberate Kenya in 1921.

The educational impact that the seven African American YMCA secretaries had on East Africa is summarized by King in *Pan-Africanism and Education*:

Further initiatives were taken in recreational work. But by far the most important, for many Africans, was the chance which the secretaries provided of beginning or continuing their education....Indeed, many hundreds of men and boys in the camps learnt their first stumbling sentences at the hands of these seven Negroes.⁶⁸

According to Yergan, it was the impression made on him by a Kenyan youth that convinced him to one day return to Africa. Yergan writes of his final encounter with this youth:

There was one young boy who had followed me over a large portion of Africa. He came down to the coast with me, when I was sick and was coming home. He came in the little boat that carried me out to the ship. When I was lifted up on deck, he tried to follow but the captain said he could not come. Then he paddled about in his boat. When our ship got under way, I raised

⁶⁷ Thuku letter to Tuskegee Institute, 8 September 1921, reprinted in King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, 261. This letter is also located in the Tuskegee Institute Archives. Thuku may not have been aware that Booker T. Washington died in 1915. However, he was probably asking for someone like Washington or DuBois.

⁶⁸ King, *Pan-Africanism*, 61.

myself up on the cot to say goodbye [sic] to him. Instead of the usual African greeting, I heard such a cry, such a shriek, that I hope I shall never hear it again. I shall never forget it. It was not for me, but because he was losing a friend who had taught him many things, who had shown him kindness—there are 150,000,000 people in Africa. I would not be able to rest if I did not go back.⁶⁹

Yergan was the first of the YMCA secretaries to try to return to East Africa and to a great degree he was a pioneer. However, his rejection by Kenya Governor Northey sent a negative message to other potential African American missionaries to East Africa.⁷⁰ To some degree it blocked the reconnection between East Africans and African Americans before it had a chance to grow.⁷¹ This was apparently what the colonial government intended to do because it feared the influence this reconnection might have on East Africans.

George Simeon Mwase, Malawian author, wrote of Cheek and Delaney in his book on the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 entitled, *Strike a Blow and Die*:

Afterwards, some time in 1901 Rev. L.N. Cheek arrived from America for the purpose of aiding John at Chiradzulu. This Pastor was sent by the head of Providence Industrial Mission in America. He was a coloured Negro. I do not know whether he was a mulatto. This man, Pastor Cheek, afterwards, married Rachel, the daughter of Chimpere, a uterine [brother] of John, and the first born son of Nyangu. In 1902 a Miss E. DeLany was also sent from America to take up works as a Schoolmasteress. She was a pure Negro lady of America. She was unmarried. The place then developed [faster] than it was expected at the first. There were a great number of School and Church members. In 1905 Miss DeLany left Chiradzulu sometime in May [and] went

⁶⁹ Manuscript entitled 'Max Yergan' September 1921, 7, Yergan YMCA files, YMCA. Portions of this manuscript appeared in *All One* the YMCA magazine, vol. 1, no. 3, 30 November 1921, 2.

⁷⁰ Sanford to McCowen of the YMCA, 26 May 1920, Max Yergan files, YMCA. Sanford speaks as Northey's secretary, 'Governor Northey does not consider it advisable, to introduce into East Africa negroes of a different calibre from those found in East Africa itself and he therefore would be glad if Mr. Max Yergan were not appointed for work among the native races.'

⁷¹ For a further discussion of the rejection of Yergan's visa application to East Africa, see footnote 23 above.

back to America for good. Mr. Daniel S. Malekebu went after her the same year and month. Mr. Daniel (then Pastor Daniel) was working to Miss DeLany as a house boy before she went back to America. At the same time he was also attending the School as well. In 1907 Pastor Cheek also left Chiradzulu for America. He took with him, his wife, Rachel, the daughter of Chimpere, [and] two sons of one Mr. Duncan Njilima. (now dead) accompanied him to America. They were Matthew Njilima and Mr. Fred Gresham Njilima. The latter is now back into Protectorate leaving the former still in America up to this time.⁷²

Cheek came to 'aid' Chilembwe in building up the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) not to control him. Mwase identifies the head of the PIM as being in America which would seem to indicate that the PIM was not a totally independent church movement. Though the PIM had significant local support, the deed to its 94 acres is still held by the NBCFMB in Philadelphia.⁷³ Cheek's mother was a Cherokee Native American and his father was an African American.⁷⁴ Historian John McCracken verifies that the sons of Duncan Njilima did accompany Cheek to the USA as Mwase states.⁷⁵ All these statements by Mwase appear to be supported by other sources.

However, not all East African impressions of African American missionaries were as uncritical as Mwase's. D.D. Phiri, Malawian historian, writes of Cheek and Delaney in 1976:

⁷² George Simeon Mwase, assisted by Robert I. Rotberg as editor, *Strike a Blow and Die* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 24. Mwase writes that the story of John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry influenced John Chilembwe to rise up against the colonial government in 1915, 'John said, this case stands the same as that of a Mr. John Brown, I have referred to above. 'Let us then strike a blow and die,' for our blood will surely mean something at last.' p. 36

⁷³ Verified by the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board secretary William J. Harvey III in an interview on 8 November 1996. See also 'The Malikebu Case,' by John Parratt in *Exploring New Religious Movements*, eds. A.F. Walls and Wilbert R. Shenk (Elkhart: Mission Focus, 1990).

⁷⁴ Interview with Cheek's great-granddaughter, Margaret Durham, 7 January 1997.

⁷⁵ See article on the Njilimas by John McCracken entitled 'Marginal Men,' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, (1989).

In 1901, a little over a year after Chilembwe's return home, there arrived at the PIM an American Negro called Rev. Landon N. Cheek. In 1902, just about a year after Cheek's arrival, another Afro-American arrived, the well-educated Miss Emma DeLany. Both Rev. Cheek and Miss DeLany had been sent by the Foreign Mission Board to assist Chilembwe. Their contributions deserve to be noted, but must not be exaggerated....They stayed for periods of three to four years, not long enough for a missionary to be effective in a land whose language and customs he does not know already....Their enduring contribution was in identifying and befriending young and talented Malawians.⁷⁶

Cheek and Delaney were actually in Nyasaland for almost seven and four years respectively. However, their overall impact cannot be measure simply by the time they spent in Nyasaland, but also by what they did to educate African Americans about Nyasaland when they returned home. Until his death fifty-seven years after returning from Nyasaland Cheek spoke positively about his experiences there and encouraged others to go and to contribute materially to the PIM. His contribution to African missions after leaving Nyasaland was undoubtedly far greater than his contribution while there.

Changes in their perceptions of East Africa

Around 1898, after a crucial New York meeting at which English missionary, Joseph Booth, was refused funds for his mission in Nyasaland, he turned to Lewis Jordan, corresponding secretary of the NBCFMB, and asked he to help with Chilembwe's education expenses. Jordan records this final meeting with Booth in his book *Up The Ladder in Foreign Missions* (1903):

⁷⁶ D.D. Phiri, *Malawians to Remember, John Chilembwe* (Lilongwe: Longman Ltd, 1976), 19,20.

With a trembling voice and tears in his eyes, he turned to us after we had gone down the steps and said, "There is the lad. Can you get him in school?" We were even more touched than he, for as we looked at that black boy of no mean ability, willing, ready and anxious for an education and Christian training, the ties that bind us as a race were tightened and we resolved, with God's help, to take him and do what we could for him. We at once secured him a scholarship in Virginia Theological Seminary and College at Lynchburg, VA. The Baptists of Pennsylvania pledged and payed [sic] for a part of his schooling and the President, Prof. G.W. Hayes gave the other.⁷⁷

This was the beginning of an eighteen year relationship between Jordan and Chilembwe that first emphasized Chilembwe's education and then focused on helping him found the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Nyasaland. This included purchasing 94 acres of land and sending missionaries Cheek and Delaney to help develop its programs.

Missionaries like Delaney, Cheek and Chilembwe represented an important link between Africans and African Americans. They provided accurate information through letters, pictures and stories about their experiences in Africa. This information was helpful in strengthening the ties between the two communities that had been weakened due to slavery. African Americans like Jordan could not imagine what life was like in Nyasaland in 1905, but Chilembwe, Cheek and Delaney knew enough about the needs of their mission station in Nyasaland to help Jordan and his

⁷⁷ Lewis G. Jordan, *Up The Ladder in Foreign Missions* (Nashville: National Baptist Convention, 1903), 131. Chilembwe founded the Providence Industrial Mission upon returning to Nyasaland. For a further explanation of this mission see George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African* (Edinburgh: 1958, revised 1987). Chilembwe was listed as a missionary from the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board according to William J. Harvey III, *Sacrifice and Dedication in a Century of Mission, 1880-1980* (Philadelphia: National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., 1979), 39. It states, 'By the year 1906, under the leadership of Rev. Lewis G. Jordan, the Foreign Mission Board had acquired a considerable number of missionaries that read as follows: Africa British Central Miss E.B. DeLaney, Blantyre, Chiradzulu. Rev. L.N. Cheek, Blantyre, Chiradzulu. Rev. John Chilembwe, Blantyre, Chiradzulu.'

constituents understand the true needs there. There was not just a one way flow of benefits to Africa, but the African American community was also influenced by African American missionaries.

As Gold Coast educator, J.E.K. Aggrey, said in a letter to Carter G. Woodson, the African American historian and founder of the *Association for the Study of Negro History*:

I personally want to join your Association and to be in constant and direct touch with it. I am sure you and others of its members will be of great help to me. And as I have Native African friends—influential men and women in nearly every Colony or State in Africa—West, South, East, Central and part of North, I may be of some assistance to you—at least I can introduce America to Africa and Africa to America.⁷⁸

Unfortunately Aggrey died less than three weeks after writing this letter, and was unable to fulfill his plan to bring the two peoples closer together. However, Aggrey's words indicated that in his mind a reciprocal relationship between Africans and African American might benefit both peoples.

Jesse Moorland, senior secretary of the YMCA, echoes Aggrey's view in this letter written to YMCA secretary William Simons in 1924:

I congratulate you on the service you are rendering and I am happy you are there and I hope you will stay by your job. You are doing a great service not only for the people there but for us here. God is no respecter of persons and I am so happy that you are serving where you are and in the way you are. I believe our group of people will yet make a great contribution to the advancement of Christ's Kingdom thru missionary effort thru-out the world.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ J.E.K. Aggrey to Carter G. Woodson, 13 July 1927, Carter G. Woodson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as LOC). According to E.W. Smith's biography entitled, *Aggrey of Africa* (London: Garden City Press, 1929), 278-9. Aggrey died on 30 July 1927 at the age of 54.

⁷⁹ Jesse Moorland to William Simons in Burma, 28 June 1923, William Simons papers, YMCA folder, LOC.

Moorland implies that to help to further Christ's Kingdom was to benefit the helper as well as the one helped. He seems to say that the sacrifice of their lives for Christ's Kingdom would ultimately make both Africans and African Americans recipients of Christ's blessings.

The descriptions of the daily struggles of African American missionaries to survive were sometimes difficult for people at home to understand.⁸⁰ However, it was not necessary for total understanding to occur. African American missionaries were not trying to make Africans and African Americans identical, but rather to bring them closer together through an understanding of their common African identity as brought through the gospel that they preached.

Much of what they chose to share about East Africa was the result of their interpretation of their experiences there. Not all of them shared positive views of their experience in Africa. Some focused on negative portrayals of cannibalism, polygamy, and illiteracy. The reason for this negative portrayal may be partially found in the financial needs that practically all African American missionaries experienced personally and knew existed in Africa. By sharing only the needy aspects of Africa, they may have thought that funds would be easier to raise. This would not have been an unusual motivation for missionary fund-raising at that time. Historian, Sandy Martin, states, "It is true that missionaries often exaggerated

⁸⁰ Kenneth I. Brown, 'Color and Christian Missions in Africa,' *The Journal of Religious Thought*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1966-67, 51. Brown states, "During a recent five and a half months visit to tropical Africa, my heart was moved again and again with appreciation as I came to understand empathetically some of the hardships and obstacles in the paths of the early missionaries and those who followed in their train."

situations in order to draw greater support for the mission cause. Thus, it may be fairly assumed that they tended to point out only what they and most cultural westerners considered to be negative aspects.”⁸¹

If they showed images of well-educated Africans the impression might have been given that Africa did not need help. It should be remembered that during this time most African Americans were only one generation removed from slavery themselves and there were still significant needs in their own families and communities. Many of them were struggling for a better life and an education for their children as well as equal opportunity in their communities. Therefore, the competition for funds from the African American community was a difficult one to win, even for a worthy cause. It may have been assumed that the community’s purse strings were best loosened by showing the negative side of Africa. However, this technique proved to be short-sighted because of Africans, like E.B. Kalibala, who came to study in USA schools.⁸² Their very presence in the USA; well dressed, articulate, and educated in some of the USA’s finest schools, was a direct contradiction of the negative stories being told by many missionaries.

⁸¹ Sandy D. Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989), 193. Martin also writes about the ‘reflex influence’ of mission work on the church, ‘In the past African mission supporters had urged their fellow Baptist to understand the intimate connection between domestic mission and foreign mission work. They had insisted on the ‘reflex influence’ that African evangelization would have on the vitality and growth of churches in the U.S. Now domestic mission advocates were posing similar arguments relative to that work.’ p. 176 If the ‘reflex influence’ worked in raising funds for African missions why could not it also work for raising funds for domestic missions.

⁸² Two examples of Africans coming to the USA for education will be addressed in chapter 6 of this research.

Some missionaries chose to present a more balanced impression of their experience in Africa. Emma Delaney wrote in a letter to her mission:

As I look back on the past year (although one I have experienced the greatest sorrow of my life) with the strain and anxiety for the work, to say nothing of the many necessities and trials that make up our every day lives, yet all these are not to be compared with the many many blessings our Heavenly Father has showered on me.⁸³

Delaney made a conscious decision to look on the positive side of her experience in spite of the difficulties she faced. As this comment reveals, Delaney did not pretend that there were no difficult experiences, but she chose to look at them in light of the positive impact her experience in East Africa had.

In an interview Cheek had with a newspaper reporter in 1908, shortly after arriving back in the USA, although the reporter wanted Cheek to reinforce a negative image of Africa, he refused to do so. Cheek responded to the reporter's question about the danger he experienced in Africa:

If you mean, as I take it you do, that the danger was from the natives themselves, I must say you have a popular conception of those people, which is altogether wrong. I never knew a more thoroughly peaceful, hospitable and amenable people than the members of the Yao tribe, and that is the largest tribe in British Central Africa. They are the most thoroughly moral people in the world, I am convinced. And they are as honest as they are moral.⁸⁴

⁸³ Emma Delaney letter published in the *MH*, vol. 8, no. 4, March 1904, 15. Delaney signed this letter, 'Yours for the Redemption of Africa. E.B. Delaney.'

⁸⁴ John M. McGuire, *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, 29 January 1989, section D, page 9, reprinted from the *St Louis Globe-Democrat*, 'Adventures of a St Louis Missionary in Darkest Africa,' vol. 34, no. 54 Magazine section, 12 July 1908, 6. See the forthcoming biography on Cheek by his great-granddaughter Margaret Durham.

Having married a Yao it is all the more understandable why Cheek spoke positively.⁸⁵ However, it is significant that he maintained this positive impression of Nyasaland for 57 years following his return to the USA.⁸⁶

Just as it was a relief for the Kikuyu elders to be assured that “the river of baptism could not wash away Kikuyuness,”⁸⁷ neither did it wash away the western cultural background of African American missionaries. However, taking the gospel to East Africa did move these missionaries towards a more realistic understanding of Africa. As they returned home they had opportunities to share with people a more thorough picture of East Africa through their experiences.

Changes in the African American Church's perception of East Africa

The editor of *Crisis*, W.E.B. DuBois, states concerning the growth of the African American Church during this period:

We find that from twenty-thousand churches in 1890 we have grown to forty thousand organizations in 1916....The membership during the same time has increased from two and one-half millions to four and one-half millions....The value of the property increased from twenty-six and one-half million dollars to eighty-seven million dollars.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ George Shepperson, ‘America through Africa and Asia,’ in *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1980, 62. Shepperson says of meeting Cheek in 1959, ‘He married Chilembwe’s niece, Rachael, and took her back with him to the States where, after a short time, she died of influenza. The Reverend Cheek taught me much about Afro-American religio-political relations with black Africa—and about our common humanity.’ See also George Shepperson, ‘Introduction’ in *From Nyasaland to Malawi*, Roderick J. Macdonald, editor, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), v.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ John Lonsdale, “‘Listen while I Read’: The Orality of Christian Literacy in the Young Kenyatta’s Making of the Kikuyu,” in *Ethnicity in Africa*, eds. Louise de la Gorgendière, Kenneth King, and Sarah Vaughan (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1996) 24.

By any standard the African American Church was experiencing significant numerical and financial growth during the 1900s and 1910s. Was its focus on African missions an afterthought resulting from a guilty conscience about its own prosperity, or did its involvement in the sending of missionaries to Africa in some way precipitate this growth as some have implied?⁸⁹

Of the missionaries central to this research, the Branches, Yergan, Stanley, Simons, Cheek, the Hemans, and Delaney continued on in the ministry after leaving East Africa either as pastors or as missionaries to other countries. This report on the Branches in the Seventh-day Adventists archive states:

Elder Thomas H. Branch. Born Jefferson Co., Miss. Dec. 24, 1856. Died Los Angeles, CA, Nov. 6, 1924, Obit Dec. 4, 1924. Henrietta P. Branch Born: Roanoke, MO. March 12, 1858. Died Philadelphia, PA. Apr. 4, 1913. Obit May 22, 1913....1893 Brother Branch embraced the truth, 1901 labored in Pueblo, 1902 asked to go to Africa. After five years in British Central Africa because of ill health he was sent to Cape Town. In 1908 [he] returned to the US where he took charge of the colored work in Denver, Colo. In 1918 Brother Branch made his home at Watts, CA until his last illness, when he went to live with his daughter, Mrs. Mabel Webb. Three sons, one daughter, and three grandchildren mourn his death.⁹⁰

The only discrepancy in this statement is the reason Branch went to South Africa was because of his wife's health and not his own.⁹¹ However, the significant thing is that

⁸⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, 'The Negro Church' *Crisis*, vol. 20, no. 1, May 1920, 9.

⁸⁹ See footnote 2 of this chapter, where Jordan implies that churches involved in missions also benefitted.

⁹⁰ P. Gustavus Rodgers, obituary of Thomas Branch in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter cited as *ARSH*) vol. 101, no. 49, 4 December 1924, 22.

⁹¹ Branch wrote in *ARSH*, 3 January 1907, 18, 'My wife's health has failed, but she keeps on, trying to keep up her part of the work. Mabel and the boys are very well. I think that my health was never better since coming to Africa.' This supports the view that Branch left Nyasaland because of his wife's health and not his own.

the Branches continued in ministry upon their return to the USA. It goes on to state about the Branches, "...they both accepted the faith of Jesus as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They devoted their lives entirely to the work of teaching the true faith to their own race. In Philadelphia (Elder Branch) has had charge of the First African Seventh-day Adventist Church for the last two years."⁹² Comparing this comment with the previous one shows that the Branches must have moved from Denver to Philadelphia to pastor this church and then in 1918, after his wife's death, Branch moved to Watts, CA to be with his daughter Mabel until his death at the age of 68. It was apparent that the Branches were active in church work for many years after their departure from Africa.⁹³

After serving as a YMCA secretary in East Africa during WWI, Walter Stanley became an Episcopal priest. He helped found Sumner High School for Negroes in Lexington, Kentucky; served as chapter President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and did social work with public and private agencies.⁹⁴ Stanley's activities, upon returning home from East Africa,

⁹² H.M.J. Richards, writes about Henrietta Branch in *ARSH*, 22 May 1913. See also another statement on the Branches by Louis B. Reynolds in *We Have Tomorrow* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1984), 333. It states, 'Thomas Branch left Malamulo for South Africa, where he laboured for a few months before returning to America in 1908. He pastored several years in Philadelphia—his wife died there in 1913—and then retired in California.'

⁹³ Further material on the Branches might be found in the First African Seventh-day Adventists Church in Philadelphia, the public records of Pueblo, Colorado, and the Seventh-day Adventist offices of Denver, Colorado.

⁹⁴ Laurence Foster, ed., *Alumni Directory of Lincoln University*, (Lincoln University: Lincoln University, 1946), 107, Langston Hughes Memorial Library, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. According to the records at Lincoln Stanley's last known address was in Youngstown, Ohio. He is listed in *Stowe's Clerical Directory* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corp., 1950) as son of William Edward Stanley and Grace Augusta (Thomas). The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church located in Austin, Texas welcomes any information available on Stanley.

contributed to the development of the local community mostly through education. His desire to give something back to the community that sent him out, was an aspect of the 'reflex influence' of the gospel that African American missionaries brought home with them.

Landon Cheek maintained a close association with the National Baptist Convention throughout the remainder of his life. This report, written shortly after his arrival in the USA, indicates that he was eager to maintain his contact with Nyasaland upon his return:

Rev. L.N. Cheek after seven years, sojourn in E.C. Africa, returned home Oct 1907. After gaining strength, and becoming acclimated in the home land again, he has faithfully labored among the churches in the interest of the land to which he has given seven of the best years of his life. He reports to us having received in contributions up to August 1st \$700.⁹⁵

Cheek served as pastor of several Baptist churches during most of his later years. He never forgot his experience in Nyasaland and often spoke of it with fondness.

Cheek helped the PIM build a large brick church and expand its educational programs. His contribution was recognized in a letter published in the *Mission Herald* in 1907. It states,

Our new church building in BCA. A first-class brick structure that could not be built in America for less than ten thousand dollars. The construction of this building was engineered and piloted through by Rev. L.N. Cheek. Brother Cheek has proven a worthy, useful and far-seeing brother.⁹⁶

It is clear that raising funds for the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Nyasaland was an important part of Cheek's later life. He knew from experience

⁹⁵ *MH*, vol. 13, no. 7, August 1908, 2. Cheek arrived in the USA in August 1907 according to his obituary after being in Nyasaland since April 1901. The \$700 Cheek raised in his first year home supports the view that he was committed to raising funds for Nyasaland.

⁹⁶ Letter in *MH*, vol. 11, no. 2, 20 February 1907, 2.

what the PIM's needs were and he encouraged African Americans to participate through their gifts to the Foreign Mission Board. It is hard to say how much the funds Cheek raised actually benefited the PIM. However, he remained committed to helping it as much as he could.

Emma Delaney also remained involved in missions, but from a different point than Cheek. This comment about Delaney by William Harvey III, corresponding secretary of the NBCFMB, is descriptive of the impact Delaney had as a pioneer missionary in Liberia, where she worked from 1912-1920:

After spending seven years on furlough during which she raised a considerable amount of money for foreign missions, Miss Emma B. Delaney returned to Africa in 1912 under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board. Upon reaching Monrovia, she traveled up the St. Paul River and stepped ashore at Arthington where a man named Saul Hall gave her 325 acres of land near the town of Suehn for the purpose of establishing a mission station. The acreage which was given was the site where the last battle between the Americo-Liberians and the natives had been fought. This battle was won by the Americo-Liberians, thus the site had historical significance. Miss Delaney established a mission and named it after the nearby town. She labored there for eight years with distinction before returning to the United States and to her native home in Fernandina, Florida. This mission,...developed into one of the most important missionary outposts sponsored by the Foreign Mission Board.⁹⁷

It is evident from the examples of Cheek and Delaney that they both sought to influence the African American Church to redirect its funds to Africa. They encouraged local Churches to open their hearts and pocketbooks to Africa's needs. Funds for African development flowed through the National Baptist Convention to projects at the PIM, in part, due to the encouragement of Cheek and Delaney.

⁹⁷ William J. Harvey III, *Bridges of Faith Across the Seas* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, 1989), 55.

Obviously, the mission's other projects benefited from these contributions as well, but what about the donors?

William Simons received this letter from his mother in the 1920s in which she explained the benefit she received in contributing to foreign missions:

I went to Rev. Bullock's church and they were having a missionary meeting. I had ten cents over from fifty cents I was saving to buy vegetables for the week to cook for Elizabeth and they were trying to raise 100 and there were very few people there. I gave the pennies, then as they continued to plead and the people continues to give and give over again I gave a quarter more, saying I would try to get by on a quarter. Well they continued to plead and when I went back to the night service I carried that other quarter. I was living then just around the corner from his church. It was raining that day all day, few out, but that night they pledged and gave and my 25 cents went. Well the next time I went out I got out my little coat to put it on as it had turned cool, and I put my hand in my pocket and felt money. I pulled it out in a hurry looked and had one dollar and a half in my hand. Surely that 50 cents was given back, pressed down and running over Ha did I not remember you then? Sure I did and many other times have I remembered that the Lord will provide....Only those who have been in that condition can tell. Your Ma.⁹⁸

The YMCA, because of its non-denominational focus, was able to raise funds from a wider cross section of the country than most churches. According to an editorial in *Crisis*, Yergan received, on behalf of the YMCA, a significant grant from John D. Rockefeller, Jr.:

After a one year lecture tour of the United States, Max Yergan, Negro YMCA secretary with the National Council of the YMCA is preparing to return to South Africa. Mr. Yergan has received \$25,000 from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., toward the erection of buildings which will serve as a center for training of Negro leaders at Alice, Cape Province, S.A.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Mrs. Simons, mother of William Simons, to Simons, undated, box 5, William Simons papers, LOC. This letter contains numerous examples of giving by Mrs. Simons and how she was provided for in return.

⁹⁹ *Crisis*, editorial, vol. 35, no. 2, February 1928, 53. In 1911 a gift of \$25,000 was received by the YMCA from a wealthy Jewish businessman in Chicago. It states this gift was, '...for a YMCA building for negroes in that city. The donor explains that, as a Jew, he sympathizes, from experience,

In a letter to Thomas Jesse Jones, education director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, Yergan expressed appreciation for the help he received in securing this Rockefeller grant, "I informed you yesterday over the telephone [sic] of Mr. Rockefeller's gift to us of \$25,000....What I wish to do in this letter is to let you know how sincerely I appreciate the help you have been to me in making possible this gift from Mr. Rockefeller."¹⁰⁰ Yergan also received, on behalf of the YMCA, a gift of \$1000 from the Phelps-Stokes Fund itself toward the same buildings mentioned in this letter.¹⁰¹

From these and previous quotations it is clear that the raising of funds for Africa was a high priority for African American missionaries. They felt it was necessary to speak of Africa in order to get these funds. Churches and mission boards were the primary avenues through which these funds were collected and sent to Africa, but as Yergan has proven, funds could also be raised from the wider community. Therefore, these missionaries were instrumental in helping African

with the negroes in the prejudice and contempt to which they are subjected.' Located in, 'The Negro and the YMCA' no author, *The Missionary Review of the World*, vol. 24, no. 4, April 1911, 311.

¹⁰⁰ Yergan to Jones of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, 7 December 1927, Yergan files of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, Schomburg. This letter is ironic because it was Jones who delayed Yergan's initial entry into South Africa. For an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the delay of Yergan's visa application to enter South Africa, see the article by W.E.B DuBois entitled 'Thomas Jesse Jones' in *Crisis*, vol. 22, no. 6, October 1921, 256. DuBois accused Jones of needlessly delaying Yergan's visa to enter South Africa until he, Jones, could determine whether Yergan was the 'right kind of Negro.'

¹⁰¹ Jones to Yergan, 11 April 1927, Phelps-Stokes Fund files, Schomburg. Jones stated, 'I am forwarding herewith check of the Phelps-Stokes Fund for \$1000, appropriated at the November 1926 meeting....It is a real pleasure to send to you this expression of the confidence and good wishes of the Phelps-Stokes Fund in your splendid work in South Africa.' I am grateful to Dr. Jack Thompson for pointing out that the building that Yergan was raising funds for is currently part of Fort Hare University.

American Churches and individuals redirect their resources to best meet needs in Africa.

Unlike most missionaries, the Hemans were able to leave Central Africa wealthier than when they came. Thompson, the London Missionary Society secretary, writes of Hemans in a letter to Laws at Livingstonia:

It is evident also, from my personal knowledge of his position that his thrifty habits have not kept him quite free from the danger of thinking too much of the main chance. He has done what missionaries as a rule are not able to do, he has amassed a considerable amount of money in Central Africa, which is invested partly in this country and partly in Jamaica. My own opinion is that now his character is cleared, the best thing for the Society and for him will be for us to bring his official connection with us honourably to an end and let him settle down among his own people.¹⁰²

According to Thompson's wishes the Hemans returned to their home in Jamaica.

From their positions of leadership in the church they could help others benefit from their experience in Africa.

It is likely that African American missionaries followed the fund-raising methods of Booker T. Washington or at least they were aware of his methods from his books. Washington gave the following advice about fund-raising in his book *Up From Slavery*:

¹⁰² Thompson to Laws, 30 September 1905, CWM, SOAS, Africa Outgoing Correspondence, microfiche 292, row e. According to James Sibree, *Register of Missionaries, Deputations, etc., 1796 to 1923* (London: London Missionary Society, 1923), 118, 'In 1906, Mr. Hemans' connection with the Society terminated and he returned to Jamaica, leaving Bristol Feb. 23. He died at Hampton, Jamaica, in Sept., 1908, aged 51.' A preliminary search by the Jamaica Archives and Records Department of its archival holdings on 23 June 1997 revealed no information on the Hemans. Further research might be done in ecclesiastical archives in Jamaica related to the Episcopal Church with which the Hemans were affiliated. It should be noted that Thompson used the term 'honourably' in reference to the Hemans' departure from the LMS which was in actuality an entirely dishonorable affair. Also it is highly doubtful that the Hemans could amass a considerable amount of money in Central Africa on just their LMS salary.

Time and time again I have been asked, what rule or rules I followed to secure the interest and help of people who were able to contribute money to worthy objects. As far as the science of what is called begging can be reduced to rules, I would say that I have had but two rules. First, always do my whole duty regarding making our work known to individuals and organizations, and, second, not to worry about the results.¹⁰³

Regardless of whether Washington followed his own advice or not, it is probable that they read his books and followed his methodology in fundraising. They saw the sharing of accurate information about Africa's needs as necessary in order to secure funds from the African American community.

Sharing information was necessary according to YMCA secretary, William Simons, who wrote, "Surely 1/2 the world doesn't know the other half!"¹⁰⁴ Simons job was to inform African Americans about Africa and vice versa.

The following letter written in October 1914 by John Chilembwe, head of the Providence Industrial Mission in Nyasaland, to the NBCFMB, his sponsoring mission, indicates the desperate need his station had at that time:

I am afraid of the war, which exists between Great Britain and Germany, war the results of which has already paralyzed all business in Africa. I don't know how you can help us, but by all means try to send us something to sustain our lives and bodies, for we, as well as those who are taking part, are greatly in need. Please in some way send us help, or leave us to die, if you choose. At this writing I am penniless. Pray that God in His Chariot may bring messengers of peace and that the Nations may be brought back to the Temple of Peace.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1900 revised 1928), 181. Washington concludes by stating, 'My experience and observation have convinced me that persistent asking outright for money from the rich does not, as a rule, secure help. I have usually proceeded on the principle that persons who possess sense enough to earn money have sense enough to know how to give it away and that the mere making known of the facts regarding Tuskegee, has been more effective than outright begging.' p. 183

¹⁰⁴ Simons, diary, 20 March 1918, box 1, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹⁰⁵ Chilembwe to L.G. Jordan, secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, in *MH*, vol. 10, October 1914, 2. This letter was published only a few months before Chilembwe led an

The African American community already felt obliged to give a portion of its wealth to meet the needs of Africa. The question that these mission reports helped answer was what was the best way to direct those funds? Accurate information on Africa helped African American churches allocate their resources effectively.

Changes in African American views of African identity and consciousness

Every culture seeks to preserve and pass on to the next generation what it considers to be the best aspects of its culture. Through this, an unbroken chain of identity is developed on which each generation can build. However, if an inadequate cultural background exists, then a positive identity may be lost or damaged. Identity may not remain the same throughout one's life, but it gives one an entry point into life from which to grow. Therefore it is an important aspect of building cultural understanding.

African American missionaries helped put together an important piece of the identity of African Americans. Their message was that history had not forgotten the contribution that the African and therefore the African American had made.

In the early 1920s, African identity was experiencing a renaissance among African Americans. This is shown in this quote by W.E.B. DuBois who in 1921 is addressing Phelps-Stokes Fund education director Thomas Jesse Jones' effort to dictate the type of education needed in the African American community:

uprising against the colonial government in Nyasaland. See also Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, (Edinburgh, 1958).

Simply make it clear to the world that while we have no enmity against Mr. Jones and are not stopping to question his motives or purposes, as American Negroes, and as men, we propose to speak for ourselves and to be represented by spokesmen whom we elect: and whenever in any case this policy is contravened we are going to fight that decision in every civilized way.¹⁰⁶

To demand to be treated with human dignity is what the term 'Nègritude' means according to Caribbean poet, Aimé Césaire. He states, "Essentially Nègritude is a doctrine which asserts the black man as a man with his own culture, his own civilization and his own original contributions."¹⁰⁷ It means defining blackness by blackness rather than by western cultural standards. As Césaire states:

The colonized is elevated above jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. It is obvious that such a policy was based on the arrogant assumption that French political and cultural institutions surpassed those of any colonial peoples....Is it any surprise therefore if the intrinsic potency of the oppressed man's humanity cries out."¹⁰⁸

The following quote by West African scholar, J.A. Langley, is helpful in understanding what was happening world-wide in terms of race:

1919-1920 had witnessed serious race riots in the United States, constitutional agitation in India, and economic and political unrest in several

¹⁰⁶ W.E.B. DuBois, 'Thomas Jesse Jones,' in *Crisis*, vol. 22, no. 6, October 1921, 256. DuBois states further that 'Dr. Jones is attempting to do in Africa precisely what it is claimed he did in America, namely, to assign all colored people to one of the two so-called schools, and then to say that those of one of those schools cannot undertake to minister to the needs of the race. But his action goes further, for it will tend to prevent any colored man serving in a missionary capacity in Africa.' p. 256. DuBois was obviously not one of the 'Tuskegee type Negroes' that Jones recommended. For a further study of the relationship between Jones, Yergan, DuBois, and Carter Woodson see King, *Pan-Africanism and Education* (Oxford, 1971). Also see the Phelps-Stokes Fund archives located in the Schomburg Center, New York City Public Library.

¹⁰⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Ltd., 1956), 20. Césaire says of colonization, 'The colonization of the black people cannot therefore be classed as the temporary occupation of the weak man's territory by the physically strong. The jungle law has gone deeper-it has stated that that which I have retained by my will must express my will. It must become an object to fulfill my desires and wishes.' p. 11 In many ways Thomas Jones, of the Phelps-Stoke Fund, was expressing this very attitude in using education as a political control device.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 17, 11.

British African colonies, in South Africa, and the Belgian Congo. The 'rising tide of colour' took various forms in different parts but on the whole it was believed that this new race-consciousness was a direct result of the Great War and that it was stimulated by Negro American self-assertion.¹⁰⁹

International thinking was beginning to spread among people of color worldwide. As they became more aware of each other's plight they began to question the myths of racial and cultural superiority of the West. As a result, they began to demand to be treated with human dignity and fairness. This new sense of identity increased their understanding of the equal value of their cultures with other cultures, not having to conform to the cultural standards of others.

There were and always will be distinctions between Africans and African Americans. As DuBois wrote in an editorial for *Crisis* in 1922:

The editor distinctly believes that Africa should be administered for the Africans and, as soon as may be, by the Africans. He does not mean by this that Africa should be administered by West Indians or American Negroes. They have no more right to administer Africa for the native Africans than native Africans have to administer America."¹¹⁰

Having a common African identity does not mean that everyone with African ancestry is the same. It does mean that a degree of common cultural identity is shared by all. This gives diverse peoples a common ground from which to share their

¹⁰⁹ J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 71. Sandy Martin, *Black Baptist and African Missions* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989), 176. Martin states, 'According to the Lott Carey Convention corresponding secretary, William M. Alexander of Maryland, there were five reasons why black Baptists had 'special obligations' to Africa: (1) its huge size, (2) a great neglect of Africa by Christian missionary societies, (3) the legacy of Lott Carey and other black American Baptist who gave their lives for the redemption of the mother continent, (4) the appeals of many converted Africans for help from their African kin in the U.S., (5) and the common destiny of Africans and Afro-Americans.' The final two reason are particularly significant for this research.

¹¹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, editorial, *Crisis*, vol. 23, February 1922, 155.

lives and grow in understanding and respect for one another. As William Simons wrote in his diary, “Wish I knew what the statement: ‘Ethiopia shall lift up her hands to God,’ means. When I see the ‘boys’ as they are called, marching down the street single file two or three hundred at the time each with a load on his head - loaded but singing in his happiness and when I recall my experience with them - I wonder.”¹¹¹

African identity and consciousness among African Americans was strengthened by the return of these missionaries from East Africa. This reconnection between East Africans and African Americans brought them closer together.

Historian Sylvia Jacobs states: “The significance of the mission work of African American churches in Africa was that it helped to bridge the chasm between Africans on the continent and African Americans that had been created by the slave trade.”¹¹²

African Americans were not the only ones to recognize the positive benefits of this reconnection. British educationist, A. Victor Murray, seems to be sympathetic to it in his book, *The School in the Bush*, (1929) when he writes, “One of the most important factors in African education today is the influence of America, both black and white. The educated Native is beginning to be conscious of his kinship with the Negro people across the Atlantic and they in turn are showing an increased awareness of him.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Simons, diary, 22 February 1919, William Simons papers, box 1, LOC. The quote, ‘Ethiopia shall lift up her hands to God,’ is from Psalm 68:31 and was often quoted by Africans and African Americans to express their hope for Africa’s potential.

¹¹² Sylvia M. Jacobs, ‘African Missions and the African American Christian Church,’ in *Encyclopedia of African American Religion*, eds. Larry G. Murphy, J. Gordon Melton and Gary L. Ward (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1993), 22.

Channing Tobias, YMCA secretary, writes of the 'reflex influence' of

Yergan's move to South Africa:

The sailing of Mr. Yergan will, without a doubt, point to the planting of the Association on the last of the continents. But, more than that, it contains immeasurable possibilities for the colored students of America. The Foreign Department of the Y.M.C.A. has now made it possible for them to give expression to their long pent-up desire to go to the rescue of their unfortunate brothers in Africa. It will have a tendency to encourage international thinking, which is so essential to any group or race that is itself suffering from discriminations or prescriptions of any kind.¹¹⁴

Tobias' statement that the idea of 'international thinking' being important to an oppressed people is significant. Knowing that others were suffering a similar oppression served to draw the two together in hope for change. It could help them look beyond their own personal sufferings to understand how their sacrifices might be part of an international struggle. The importance of 'international thinking' is that knowledge of other cultures brought the two closer together in understanding and identity. This is a process that may take generations to fully run its course, but it was enhanced by the reconnection brought about by African American missionaries.¹¹⁵

If African American missionaries had accepted the negative impression of Africa often portrayed by the West, then they would in effect have been accepting a

¹¹³ A. Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929 2nd edition 1938) 291. Murray goes on to state, 'My concern here is with white Americans rather than with the Negroes. Yet Negro America is a very important factor. Even apart from the actual contact with Africa of Negro leaders like Marcus Garvey, the status of the American Negro is a constant stimulus to 'Ethiopianism.'

¹¹⁴ Channing Tobias, 'A National Secretary for Africa,' in *The Intercollegian*, vol. 39, no. 6, March 1920, 12.

¹¹⁵ Unlike many aspects of the 20th century this process could take generations to work itself out and there may be many setbacks caused by language barriers, wars, natural disasters and economic depression. However, modern information networks are making it easier to overcome these barriers in a very short period of time.

negative impression of their own culture, indeed of themselves. For African American missionaries to reject African identity and see themselves as superior would have been to embrace the same attitudes that had so long been characteristic of their oppressors. This would have been like the contradiction of only speaking about the negative side of Africa in order to raise funds, while benefiting from the positive African identity that came from the cultural reconnection. Living with contradictions was not unusual for African Americans and was certainly prevalent in the double loyalties that many of them felt. Some coped with this inappropriately by manifesting the same paternalistic attitudes toward Africans as western imperialism did.¹¹⁶ However, others sought to grow in their African identity and help others grow by sharing their experience.

As the bonds of African identity grew from the reconnection that took place through African American missionaries, it became clear that people of African descent would rise or fall together in their struggle for freedom and equality in the world. African American missionaries helped African Americans see that by helping Africa to develop they were also helping themselves. African American historian, St Clair Drake, states:

Some Negroes have come to realize that so long as people of African descent anywhere are mocked, vilified, subjugated, oppressed, and their culture and physical traits derogated, no Negroes, no people of African descent anywhere, are fully free, that we are all in the same boat. We should all fight together

¹¹⁶ A prime example of this was the Americo-Liberian attitude toward indigenous tribes in that country. For more information on this see Bill Berkeley, *A Promise Betrayed* (New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986). See chapter 3 footnote 27 where the Hemans are quoted as saying, ‘...have come to the conclusion that even the most intelligent of them [Lungu] are but children and need to be dealt with as such.’

against segregation and discrimination. This is the one enduring basis of Pan-African solidarity.¹¹⁷

On an even higher plane, African American missionaries were helping the world to recognize African humanity by showing that they shared equally in the heavenly and earthly fruits of salvation in Christ. To degrade any part of what God had blessed was to degrade all parts. Therefore, humanity's growth depends not just on people of African descent being treated with dignity, but on all humanity being treated with dignity.

Influence towards emigration and missions to Africa

Did African American missionaries cause members of the African American community to emigrate from America or to go as missionaries? It could be said that African Americans of the 1920s were people on the move. This report from the African Methodist Episcopal Church for the period 1920-1924 explains this movement:

The migration of our people from the South to the East, Northeast, West and Northwest has so disconcerted our Church in its solidarity at home that, unless this matter is taken in hand and controlled, it is hard to tell what the future will be. Formerly, we boasted of our great strength in the South, and from that territory, doubtless, came two-thirds of all the moneys collected for all purposes. Today our people are leaving the South and settling in these territories above mentioned and a large portion of them join other churches, or none at all.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ St Clair Drake, 'The American Negro's Relation to Africa,' *Africa Today* December 1967, 12.

¹¹⁸ W.W. Beckett, ed., *The Twenty-seventh Quadrennial Report of The Parent, Home and Foreign Missionary Department of the AME Church, 1920-1924*, New York: African Methodist Episcopal Publishers, 1924), 8. The report goes on to state, 'I find that it is absolutely impossible for this department to assume any more obligations in foreign fields. The money that comes into the office is not enough to do extension work anywhere, and it would be well for us to nourish and maintain

At that time, African Americans were moving in large numbers, not as emigrants, but as migrants. The movement was primarily out of the southern USA into the northern and western parts of the country. Garvey's prophecies of a mass exodus of African Americans to Africa never took place. However, Garvey is partially vindicated by the mass migration of African Americans from the southern USA to other parts of that country.

Few African American missionaries to East Africa actually emigrated. However, at least one of these missionaries spoke openly of his desire for African Americans to emigrate in large numbers. Landon Cheek was committed to emigrating to Nyasaland when he first arrived there. He maintained emigration as a viable option in this article in the *Mission Herald* written over 30 years after his departure from Nyasaland:

There is no need for us to remain in economic, mental and physical slavery while such a beautiful spot beckons our coming. If the powers that be can urge a homeland for Jewish refugees, we as Afro-Americans should see in time where we can plant our feet on solid ground in our own motherland. It is shameful that as a race we can find money by the barrel to build up U.S.A., migrate "from pillar to post" here, and tour even to Jerusalem and the Orient, yet never go to Africa. Do you ever think of the utterances of the late Dr. Morgan, who was a friend of home missions, and who once prophesied that inasmuch as shiploads of slaves were sold into U.S.A., our new freedom would give us the true vision and shiploads of Afro-Americans would go back to redeem Africa?¹¹⁹

successfully the points which it has now under its jurisdiction.' p. 12. According to this report, no funds were expended by the AME Church in East or Central African work during this four year period. p. 20,21.

¹¹⁹ Landon N. Cheek, 'Reminiscences of A Missionary,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 4, September-October 1940, 18. Cheek goes on to say, 'There is not a ghost of a chance to get up as a race in U.S.A. All you get will be a 'hand-out' which may be taken by the giver at will.' p. 18. As historian Edwin Redkey wrote, 'While European immigrants by the millions entered the country, the very thought that anyone would want to leave the United States to look for better opportunities elsewhere seemed absurd to most Americans.' *Black Exodus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 290.

In addition to Cheek, the Branches encouraged other Seventh-day Adventists to emigrate to Nyasaland. In an editorial on the Branches, Joseph Booth states, “The Branch family are delighted with Africa and are constantly wishing that more SDA colored brethren could be located as missionaries or settlers among the tribes.”¹²⁰ Booth goes on to speak of the Branch’s desire for more Seventh-day Adventists to come to Nyasaland, “The Branch family have given me the names of about twenty negro S.D.A. friends who wish to return and stay in Africa.”¹²¹ It is evident that the Branches hoped that others might emigrate to East Africa. Branch himself wrote in 1904, “I would be glad if more of our people would come to this part of Africa, to work among this people who are in heathen darkness, to help lift them up to stand as men for God.”¹²² Though the Branches’ message and desire were clear, for reasons like the colonial color bars and other priorities of African American missions, it is doubtful that any African Americans were immediately able to follow the Branches to East Africa.

In response to the news about the YMCA secretaries in East Africa this letter came from the Caribbean to YMCA secretary Moorland in 1918, “If you could make it possible for me to join those brave and noble-spirited men, like Messers Max

¹²⁰ Joseph Booth, letter in *ARSH*, 16 December 1902, 14.

¹²¹ Joseph Booth to Elder Daniells concerning the Plainfield Mission Station Cholo, BCA, 10 October 1902, Joseph Booth papers, SDA archive.

¹²² Thomas Branch letter in, *ARSH*, 3 March 1904, 17. Missionaries like Branch were not devoid of attitudes of cultural superiority and sometimes proposed emigration to Africa without reference to the views of the local people. According to the SDA archives the first African Americans to go to East Africa following the Branches arrived in 1945.

Yergan, Lloyd, Ballou, Richey, Pritchett & others, 'Somewhere', 'Over there' on the field of duty where are even my own West Indian Troops, I shall be happy and grateful to you."¹²³ It was true that West Indians did fight in East Africa during the war. However, there is no record of Charles becoming a YMCA secretary. This is in spite of the fact that the YMCA leader in East Africa, C.R. Webster, made the following recommendation in his annual report in 1917, "The assignment to East Africa of not less than twelve American colored secretaries, these men to possess the same general qualifications as those now engaged in army work and in addition to have aptitude for language study and teaching ability."¹²⁴ Webster goes on to state, "The colored secretaries now on the field are paid from local sources and this arrangement can be continued during 1918."¹²⁵ Since these secretaries were running canteens that often supplemented the diets of the troops and carriers, they were able to become self-supporting during the war. However, this was partially due to the importation privileges and access to facilities gained by the YMCA during wartime conditions. After WWI the YMCA had to find another way to fund its programs in East Africa and this reduced the possibilities of the expansion of the YMCA there.

¹²³ William A. Charles to J.E. Moorland of the YMCA, 6 June 1918, p. 2, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. Charles concludes by saying, 'I seek not fame, but a life of the fullest service and usefulness and sacrifice, if needs be in order that the world may be saved for Democracy.' p. 3.

¹²⁴ Major C.R. Webster, 'Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 1917,' p. 2, East Africa War Work files, YMCA. Apparently a number of YMCA secretaries eventually joined other mission boards after the war. Dixon states, 'Incidentally you will be interested to know that of the short term men who came to India and Mesopotamia for War work I know of at least fifteen who are now back east of Suez as Missionaries.' Leonard Dixon to William Simons, 22 April 1922, box 5, William Simons papers, LOC.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

The desire to emigrate to Africa required a substantial amount of money that few people could afford.

YMCA secretary William Simons wrote this letter to Moorland recommending the recruitment of two West Africans, E.R. Trench from Sierra Leone and William ZacCoker from Cape Coast. He states, "I think the two men will be invaluable to us in our future work in Africa. So please send as much literature of the colored work in the States as you can. I want you to join me in prayer that the distant plans work out in our favour."¹²⁶ The 'distant plans' obviously referred to an ongoing indigenous YMCA work in Africa.

Encouragement given by these missionaries for African Americans to become emigrants to Africa was not frequently heeded due to the colonial ban on African Americans, the lack of funds needed, health difficulties and a simple lack of interest. Booker T. Washington made this statement about emigration to Africa in 1913, "The Negroes of America regard this country as their home and are convinced that they are better off here than they would be in any other part of the world. For that reason, they have no desire to emigrate."¹²⁷ The need for missions among newly founded migrant communities in the USA probably encouraged African Americans to consider being missionaries in their own country rather than Africa. There was no

¹²⁶ Simons to Moorland, 19 April 1918, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. The area of African missionaries supported by African American churches and organisations at this time is in need of further research.

¹²⁷ Booker T. Washington to Joseph Booth, 13 November 1913, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol 12, 1912-1914, eds. Louis R. Beach and Raymond W. Smock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 251.

ban on the number of African Americans who could leave the Southern USA for other parts of the country.

African American missionaries encouraged others to consider becoming missionaries to East Africa, but the colonial ban focused most of them on Liberia or home missions. They probably encouraged people at home, in the same way that they encouraged people in East Africa, to get their education first and then consider the mission field. In an interview with Josephine Simons Wade, sister of YMCA secretary William Simons, she said that of the 13 children in her family, all but two earned college degrees. She attributes this in part to her brother William who sought to influence his siblings to get their education more than to become missionaries or emigrants.¹²⁸ It was the value of education that was of primary importance in the Simons' home. Education, once denied to them during slavery and afterwards used as a political tool to train them for subservient roles, was seen by most African Americans as the key to opening doors of opportunity in the USA. African American missionaries were successful in encouraging African Americans to get education, but not successful and in some cases not interested in encouraging them to emigrate to Africa.

¹²⁸ Interview with Josephine Simons Wade, relative of William Simons, on 4 December 1996, Washington, D.C.

Difficulties in adjusting to home culture

Apart from resting to restore their health, the main concern of most missionaries upon returning home was finding meaningful work. Some of the YMCA secretaries had interrupted their university studies to go to East Africa during the war. Their goal was to return to school and obtain their degrees. Thomas Lloyd, for example, finished his degree in Commerce at Howard University in 1922.¹²⁹

Besides going back to school, they looked for jobs. This letter to Simons from E.C. Carter of the YMCA, expresses his concern about Simons' job prospects in the USA:

I do hope that you will not have difficulty in getting a position of usefulness now that you have come back to this country. I often think of the splendid service which you rendered the Indian YMCA in different parts of the world during the war and since. I imagine that things are still going so slow in Africa that there is little likelihood of your getting an opportunity of YMCA service there but Mr. Slack and Mr. Tobias are better informed on this matter than I.¹³⁰

Simons was offered a job in 1926 by William Clark, president of Virginia Union University in Richmond. Clark states, "I am writing to ask you to join our force of workers at the University next year. I want you to come and help in the general work of looking after the men. Your salary will be \$800 for the first year. I think that you can fill a very important place here and I hope that you will be willing to come."¹³¹

¹²⁹ Howard University Registrar Office verifies Lloyd's graduation in 1922.

¹³⁰ E.C. Carter to William Simons, 11 December 1924, William Simons papers, YMCA file, LOC.

¹³¹ William Clark, president of Virginia Union University, to William Simons, 11 August 1926, box 5, William Simons papers, LOC.

Simons declined this offer and chose instead to enter Gordon College in Boston. He eventually graduated with a Bachelors in Theology in 1930 and was ordained as a Baptist minister by Peoples Baptist Church in that city.¹³² His adjustment to the USA as a single male was smooth and when he decided to go to Ogbomoshu, Nigeria as a Southern Baptist missionary he adjusted well there also.

Of the thirteen missionaries studied thus far, six were or became professional educators. Delaney and Simons joined mission schools and Stanley, Yergan and the Hemans either founded or taught in schools in the USA and Africa. This was a continuation of the educational focus of their missionary work in East Africa.

Maintaining the connection with East Africa

One of the primary ways African American missionaries maintained their connection with East Africa was by raising funds for missions there. These funds were used to support African missionaries and build up the mission stations in areas where African American missionaries were not permitted to go.

This connection was also maintained by identifying promising African leaders who could be helped to study in USA schools and return to Africa as missionaries. Just as colonial governments sought to keep African American missionaries out of their areas they also tried to restrict the flow of Africans to America. Although the

¹³² Minnie Simons Williams, *A Colloquial History of A Black South Carolina Family Named Simons*, (Washington, D.C.: Minnie S. Williams, 1990), 32. See also Simons papers Library of Congress for further information on his time in Boston.

vast majority of schools in colonial Africa at this time were still financed and run by missions, the desire to keep Africans from going to the USA for education motivated the British colonial government to allocate some educational funding for Africa.¹³³ This created somewhat of a rift between moderate blacks in South Africa who were in favor of developing local universities versus more radical blacks who wanted to send their youth to study in African American schools in the USA.¹³⁴

Another important method used by African American missionaries to maintain the connection between Africa and Africa America was the sharing of photographs taken in East Africa. Moorland, of the YMCA, was particularly impressed with the photographs Lloyd sent him. He asked Lloyd repeatedly to send him more pictures because they helped raise awareness at home.¹³⁵

Cheek also used a magic lantern, a kind of slide projector, to raise awareness among his supporters in 1911. It was reported, "At the Springfield, Ohio meeting Cheek, who was seven years in Africa, and who is now our prospective missionary

¹³³ Contrasting examples of this may be seen in the establishment of Fort Hare University in South Africa in 1916 and Kenneth King, 'Early Pan-African Politicians in East Africa,' in *Mawazo*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1969, 4. 'Daniel Kato became in June 1920 the first Ugandan entrant to Tuskegee, establishing in the process a direct link with the Young Baganda Association for information and literature from Negro America.' This link was the very thing that the British colonial government wanted to avoid and in 1922 partially attributed to it the unrest surrounding the arrest of Harry Thuku.

¹³⁴ In 1905, when the idea of developing the South African Native College at Fort Hare (later called Fort Hare University) was discussed among moderate blacks, the more radical blacks developed the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme, which aimed at providing scholarships for black youth to study abroad. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, (Pretoria: UNISA, forthcoming), chapter 8, 'Redeeming Failure.'

¹³⁵ Moorland to Lloyd, 30 October 1918, Moorland YMCA War Work files, MSRC. William Sheppard, Presbyterian missionary to the Congo in the early 1900s, took many striking photographs of one-armed children to show the atrocities of King Leopold's administration of the country.

for superintending the work in East Central Africa, arrived with a magic lantern to show the peoples and scenes he worked among.”¹³⁶

Most African American missionaries also brought back artifacts which they used to tell the stories of their experiences. William Sheppard, Presbyterian missionary to the Congo, was encouraged in this area by Armstrong, president of Hampton Institute. It was stated, “He had convinced Sheppard that exposure to artifacts was one of the best ways of inculcating appreciation of other peoples.”¹³⁷

Just as storytelling was an effective method in communicating the gospel in Africa, it was also one of the most effective methods for maintaining the reconnection between Africans and African Americans. Here is a story frequently told by William Sheppard, missionary to the Congo:

We saw a father and mother sitting under the eave of their house weeping over a very sick child. Soon the witch doctor appeared carrying a chicken in his arm, which he rubbed over the naked body of the child. He then went to one of these images and holding the chicken over the image broke the legs of the chicken, then its back, and wringing its neck off dropped the blood on the image, then on the child’s face and body. The doctor left the chicken with instructions that the parents should eat it. In this way people are healed, as they believe, of their diseases.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Editorial in *MH*, January 1911, 4. On a Prayer Calendar published by the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board for the year 1911 it states, ‘for February, British Central Africa, Superintendent Rev. John Chilembwe, 1 Missionary, 5 Churches, 800 members, 7 native helpers, and 625 pupils.’ This calendar is located in the Shepperson papers in EUL.

¹³⁷ William E. Phipps, *Sheppard and Lapsley: Pioneer Presbyterians in the Congo* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church USA, 1991), 58. Phipps states this about Sheppard, ‘Oral history continues to be strong in the Kasai and the Bakuba speak fondly of the American blacks who identified with their plight.’ p. 123. Artifacts brought back by Sheppard are located in the main library at Hampton University, Virginia and at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

¹³⁸ William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, n.d.), 70. This story by Sheppard entitled ‘Africans Work for Africa’ in *Missionary Review of the World*, vol. 29, October 1906, 770. is relevant here, ‘Do you not know,’ he [the chief] said, ‘that it is the custom when the crown passes from one family to another to murder all the sons of the old king? Were you not told that you were to be shot with poisonous arrows?’ I answered that I had heard it, but did not believe it. ‘It is true,’ the king said. And he added: ‘Can we settle this thing

Emma Delaney wrote in her annual report for 1913 this conversion story of a man on her station in Liberia:

We have had some very excellent meetings: many have heard God's word even if they did not care to, as in the case of a man who was converted in the village a few months ago. He refused to come out to the meetings when asked, but remained in his hut stretched upon his mat. On Monday he came to me, and with the assistance of an interpreter, he said: 'Mamma, I would not come out to that 'God Palaver' you were talking, but I heard it all, and I tried to forget it, but it just laid down in my heart, and turned over and over everywhere I went, and something told me to come to you yesterday, but I would not. Last night I could not sleep (his wife and the woman in the next hut were witnesses to the fact that he prayed all night), and this morning my heart came up (their way of saying they are happy) and a man told me to come to you and tell you all about it, and also to tell you to take me to the stream and wash my face (baptise him).' I don't know where he got this washing from, for he has never seen a person baptized, and I am positively sure I have said nothing about it since I have been out here.¹³⁹

Delaney includes a second story in the same letter:

There are customs here which make everything so uncertain, especially with women and children. Only last week a man that I have always thought was above the average, told me that he would bring his little girl to school the next day. I waited over a week, and as he did not put in his appearance. I inquired the reason. I learned to my disgust that the man had bought an ox of his uncle a year ago, and has never paid for it. The uncle being in need of money, came to his nephew and demanded that the debt be paid at once. The

now?' 'I hope so,' I said, and I could see murder in his eyes. The king called for a man, who brought a small pouch of leopard skin. The king called another man and asked him for a banana leaf. He put it over the fire to make it pliable. Then he took some strong medicine out of the leopard skin and put it into the banana leaf. After sitting awhile he had it tied up and gave it to a servant, telling him to throw it into the Lingadi River. 'Do you see that' said the king. 'Yes,' I replied. 'It has gone into the Lingadi,' said the king, 'from that to the Lingadi, then to the N'gala. I can not call it back, and it will not come back. Just so everything is gone that was between us which I had in my heart against you. Now, what are *you* going to do?' 'I don't know your custom,' I replied, 'but we have a custom of praying, and if you will allow me I will kneel here on the mat with you and pray.' After prayers we went to out houses, and a week later I returned to Ibanj.'

¹³⁹ Letter from Emma Delaney to the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention in the *MH*, vol. 10, October 1914, 2,3. Early copies of this magazine are available at the NBCFMB offices in Philadelphia and at the Schomburg Center of the New York City Public Library. Delaney concludes her report of her beginning in Liberia with the following statement, 'The world crowns success, God crowns faithfulness.' See also the biography of Delaney by Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach, 1987).

nephew had no money so the little girl, who was to have been put into school, was given to the uncle for the debt. The probabilities are that the girl will never be redeemed; hence, she will be the property of this uncle all her life. And so it goes. A man will take his wife and children to go bonds for his friend as quick as a man at home would give his deeds. A woman and her children may be with the husband and father today in this village, and tomorrow they will be owned by some other man in a village miles away. One can readily understand how they sold their children into slavery centuries ago. I trust that Christianity will destroy these customs in years to come.¹⁴⁰

Finally, this story was told by Henrietta Branch, missionary to Nyasaland, in 1905:

These Mang'anja people believe their chief to be a prophet. They are constant and earnest in upholding the things he teaches them. When he calls them to come to offer sacrifices, you may be sure every man, woman, and child is on hand and on time. A strange thing happened to this chief last year. The rains failed to come in their season, so he called all together to offer sacrifice to the Great Spirit. They came, and offered sacrifice for several days, and waited for the Great Spirit to answer by sending the rain. But the rain did not come. They offered again *ufa* (corn-meal) and *moa* (beer), but still no sign of rain. They determined something must be wrong with the chief or some of the head men, of whom there are large numbers. So they cast lots, and to their great surprise, the lot fell on their chief. Generally such a one is termed a witch, and the punishment is death, by making him drink poison. But this being his royal highness, other means were resorted to. They pronounced him unclean and afraid of water, and the Great Spirit refused to send rain, as he would not bathe often; for frequent bathing is much practised by the native, but, strange to say, this chief was an exception to the rule. A delegation of head men was appointed to take him daily to the stream and give him a bath. In case he refused, death was to be the penalty. The old chief took to the water in good earnest. Soon after this he sent for Mr. Branch to come to preach the Word of God to him and his people. He asked many questions about the written Word.¹⁴¹

Stories like these made African Americans feel the connection with East Africa. They reminded the Africa American audience of its own heritage in Africa.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Henrietta Branch, 'In the Land of Livingstone,' *ARSH*, 3 August 1905, 17.

This also caused people to consider how they might give to meet the needs of missions.

Conclusion

The principal factors that motivated African American missionaries toward a reconnection with Africa may be summarized as calling from God, race, African identity, and education.

Calling from God

Possibly the greatest factor that motivated African Americans towards missions to East Africa was their sense of calling from God. They knew the risks involved in going to Africa at that time were great. There were few emigrants and fewer tourists and the risks of sickness and/or death made any decision to go a serious one. However, their sense of duty to obey their calling was an important factor in their willingness to face the struggles of missionary life. Yergan wrote of his sense of God's direction in his life in the midst of WWI in East Africa, "Even though we see all these conditions of misery and suffering—the world actually bleeding everywhere—we realize that the hand of God is still guiding the affairs of men and we realize the absolute need on our part to living close to Him."¹⁴² Emma

¹⁴² Max Yergan, 'A YMCA Secretary in Africa,' *Southern Workman*, vol. 47, 1 August 1918, 403.

Delaney, who served with Cheek in Nyasaland, shared the same sense of calling. She wrote shortly before leaving the USA in 1902:

I go not because the work at home is of less importance but because nine from every ten will stay at home where opportunities are in the reach of all, and those who are in darkness are so because they will not receive the light. I am not going to seek gain nor on a pleasure trip, but against the wishes of my friends and bitterest protest of a father whose wishes have always been sacred; I go because I am commanded to go.¹⁴³

Statements like these were common among African American missionaries who seemed to feel that if they had to risk everything, they would risk it trying to obey what they believed was God's calling. As NBCFMB secretary, William Harvey III, states, "We, the Black American, [sic] do not champion a cause because we lack causes to champion. We preach Christ and him crucified because there is no greater cause than this to embrace."¹⁴⁴ This sense of calling was not unique to African American missionaries. Many other missionaries claimed a similar sense of God's direction in their lives. Nevertheless, it was an important factor in motivating and sustaining African American missionaries in East Africa.

Race

The common racial heritage shared between East Africans and African Americans was a factor that drew them together. However, the colonial government

¹⁴³ Emma B. Delaney, 'Why I Go As A Foreign Missionary,' *Spelman Messenger*, vol. 18, no. 5, February 1902, 5.

¹⁴⁴ William J. Harvey III, *Sacrifice and Dedication in a Century of Mission, 1880-1980* (Philadelphia: Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., 1979), 13.

used race to try to keep them apart. Colonial officials enforced their unwritten color bars on African Americans by vetoing their visa applications for entry to East Africa. Historian, Christopher Fyfe, explains these unlegislated color bars in this way, “My main theme is that race in the periods of empire and decolonization was acted, rather than spoken about.”¹⁴⁵ It was understood in British East Africa that if a civil service job became vacant that there was no need for an African to apply. It did not need to be legislated by law.¹⁴⁶

In part, colonial administrators’ fears of Marcus Garvey’s threats to lead millions of African Americans back to Africa made them sensitive to any African Americans coming to their areas. This statement by Garvey gives some indication of the objectives of his organization:

The Universal Negro Improvement Association, an organization of six million scattered members of which I am President-General, is working for a solution of the problem through the founding and establishing in Africa of a nation for Negroes, where the race will be given the fullest opportunity to develop itself, such as we may not expect in countries where we form but a minority in a majority Government of other races.¹⁴⁷

However the color bar system involved more complex issues than just the fear of the Garvey movement. As Norman Leys, medical doctor and resident in Africa for 20

¹⁴⁵ Christopher Fyfe, ‘Race, Empire and Decolonization in Africa,’ *Rethinking African History*, eds. Simon McGrath and others (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1997), 9.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Marcus Garvey, ‘Letter to Guy M. Walker, dated 10 March 1924,’ in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, ed. John H. Clarke (New York: Random House, 1974), 152. Garvey’s wife Amy Jacques Garvey stated in the same book, ‘In 1924, Marcus Garvey had completed plans for a large settlement of American Blacks to Africa. He intended to make Liberia the African headquarters of the UNIA. The European powers who were occupying Africa brought pressure on Liberia to deny Garvey the right to start a settlement in that country. They feared that the spirit of nationalism would spread throughout Africa and put an end to colonial rule.’ p. 104. However, others have said that Liberia refused Garvey’s emigration plans because it feared Garvey’s political ambitions.

years, wrote in *The Colour Bar in East Africa*, "In both Rhodesias and in Kenya an African's life is so beset by colour bars that the moment he leaves his village home he meets them at every turn."¹⁴⁸ Much like the Jim Crow laws in the southern USA, so the color bar system institutionalized the superiority of whites in East Africa regardless of how individuals felt about it. Fyfe states of the colonial period:

There were, one must remember, many kinds of white people in colonial Africa. Some were harsh and domineering, treating Africans with contempt and brutality, some were gentle and caring, treating them with consideration. But whatever their own personal feelings, they all had, whether they liked it or not, a privileged status guaranteed by the uniform of their white skin - a uniform they could never take off.¹⁴⁹

The fact that colonial officials avoided passing color bar laws in most parts of East Africa did not keep these informal laws from operating just as if they had been legislated. Fyfe states of these unwritten policies, "No barrier of race? No colour bar? A rigid barrier of race separated white from black in colonial Africa. But the separation was never explicitly formulated as part of British colonial policy. There was no need: everyone understood it....No one had to be told what everyone knew already."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Norman Leys, *The Colour Bar in East Africa* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1941) 21. Leys defines the color bar as, '...when people speak of colour bar they mean whatever it is that prevents Africans from doing skilled and better-paid work, whether it be an actual law, or merely an order by the manager of some mine, or simply the pressure of European opinion.' p. 21.

¹⁴⁹ Fyfe, 'Race, Empire and Decolonization,' 14. Fyfe states in the next paragraph, 'It was the same for Africans. Whatever their personal feelings towards Europeans - hatred, indifference, affection - their feelings were irrelevant to the political reality that kept them apart, whites to give orders, blacks to obey orders.'

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 17. Fyfe states further, 'What, more than anything else, made him [Julian Huxley] and other scientists revise their views on race was Hitler's use of it, not to govern some remote people in far-off Africa, but to exterminate white Europeans in the heart of Europe.' p. 16. Fyfe cautions writers of African history to avoid the trap of ignoring race as an issue. Although it may not have been written about, the reality of it was acted out regularly.

The presence in East Africa of well-educated African American missionaries like Max Yergan was a refutation of the presumption behind the color bar system that Africans were not equal with Europeans. This threatened the colonial system and caused them to oppose the presence of African American missionaries. This letter from G.R. Sandford of the Colonial Office to McGowen at the YMCA, dated 26 May 1920, states:

Sir Edward Northey directs me to inform you that he does not consider it advisable, to introduce into East Africa negroes of a different calibre from those to be found in East Africa itself, and he therefore would be glad if Mr. Max Yergan were not appointed for work among the native races. He suggests that if you refer to the Missionary Societies in the country you could obtain the names of suitable natives able to do the work you have in view.¹⁵¹

The distinction made in the mind of Kenya Governor Northey between Yergan and indigenous East Africans is evident. Why was he so cautious about Yergan and others like him coming into contact with Africans in Kenya colony? He probably feared that Yergan's presence might cause East Africans to become even more discontent than they already were with the position the colonial government had chosen for them. He may have also feared the very result that occurred years later when Kenyan nationalist, Bildad Kaggia, had his first encounter with an African American army surgeon during WWII. Kaggia states, "We could not believe our eyes when we saw a black man wearing three pips on his shoulders....But the day's discussion left a strong impression on my mind. I consider it the beginning of my

¹⁵¹ Sandford to McGowen, 26 May 1920, Max Yergan files, YMCA archive. See also King, 'The American Negro Missionary to East Africa: A Critical Aspect of African Evangelism,' in *African Historical Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1970, 11.

political consciousness.”¹⁵² This experience may have convinced Kaggia that if an African American could be a captain and a surgeon then an African could do the same. This realization, which arose from a brief contact, must have contradicted years of negative indoctrination about the capability of the African. It also showed the value of the reconnection between Africans and African Americans at that time. Colonial officials, like Northey, saw the reconnection of African Americans and East Africans as a threat and used color bars to keep them apart.

Color bars were designed to prevent or delay the rise of Africans to full membership in society. They were also used to exclude African Americans from East Africa. However, they could not exclude the spread of ideas of selfhood contained in African American literature like Garvey’s *Negro World*, DuBois’ *Crisis* and Woodson’s *Journal of Negro History*.¹⁵³

In 1921 when Kenyan nationalist, Harry Thuku, wrote to Tuskegee Institute asking for assistance it was evident that African American literature had influenced him:

From the books and newspapers I read dealing with the condition of Negro races in America I find that your Institute from the time of its establishment has been engaged in up-lifting the Negro races there and that you are the likely person, being its Secretary, who may be looked to, for advice by those engaged in a similar work. I therefore take the liberty of addressing you the

¹⁵² Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 26-27.

¹⁵³ Kenneth King, ‘Early Pan-African Politician in East Africa,’ in *Mawazo*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1969, 4. King states, ‘A consequence of the *Crisis* circulating in East Africa was, of course, greatly to increase the interest in American Negro education, because of the prominence given in the magazine’s advertising and copy to the Negro colleges.’ It should be noted that in addition to barring African American missionaries from entering their colony, British colonial officials also tried to prevent East Africans from going to America. Their efforts to keep these two groups from reconnecting failed to a large part because of this literature, although banned as seditious, circulating through the colonies.

following and any information or advice you may be able to give me will be gratefully appreciated.¹⁵⁴

Racism not only motivated the colonial officials to keep African American missionaries out of Africa but it also motivated white mission agencies to do the same thing. African American missionaries experienced many of the same difficulties, such as sickness and disease, which plagued other people in East Africa. The daily struggle to survive in an often hostile environment was similar for all people in East Africa. Why then, did black and white missionaries, who often served with the same religious denominations, find it so difficult to work together? Why did the white mission boards agree to assist the British colonial government in excluding African Americans from East Africa? The answer is that many western missionaries not only brought the gospel to Africa, but they also brought their beliefs in their own racial and cultural superiority. Therefore, they found that working with Africans or African Americans on an equal basis something that they simply were not prepared to do.

In 1929, W.E.B. DuBois wrote concerning the equality of treatment between African American missionaries and white missionaries:

As a matter of fact, missionary societies of the United States started out, for the most part, with the obvious policy of sending Negroes to convert Africa. Then they found out that this involved social equality between white and black missionaries; the paying of Negro missionaries on the same scale as white missionaries, and their promotion and treatment as civilized beings. With few exceptions, American white Christianity could not stand this, and they consequently changed their policy. Several of them stopped sending Negroes, altogether.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Harry Thuku to Tuskegee Institute, 8 September 1921, reprinted in King, *Pan-Africanism*, 261.

White and African American missionaries on the same station had to have close social contact with each other and this contact was difficult to reconcile with any perceptions of racial superiority. The solution often chosen by white missionaries was to treat the Africans and African Americans as assistants or helpers, or if they were unwilling to accept this role, then to keep them from entering the field at all.

Race played an important part in drawing Africans and African Americans together because they shared a common experience of oppression, but it also played a part in the British colonial government and European mission agencies trying to keep them apart. They both agreed that supervision of Africans and African American missionaries by whites was essential. This was particularly true after the Chilembwe uprising in 1915. As a result many Africans and African American missionaries started independent churches and mission agencies.

African Identity

The feeling of a common cultural identity between East Africans and African Americans also played an important role in the reconnection between these two communities. The African identity of African Americans was strengthened as a result of the ethnic reconnection brought about by these missionaries. This was an

¹⁵⁵ W.E.B. DuBois, 'The Missionaries' *Crisis*, vol. 36, May 1929, 168. DuBois supports his view by referring to a number of letters from American mission boards stating their policy on the sending of African American missionaries. This one from the Sudan Interior Mission is most clear, 'Our brethren from American Negro churches practically have to live on the same plane almost as their white brethren, and this creates a problem.'

important issue in that although African Americans sent resources and people to Africa, Africa gave identity and ancestry to African Americans. African American missionaries represented the feelings of affinity many African Americans had for Africa and their desire to help by giving some of their resources.

This idea of kinship was stated by James Hemans, missionary to the Lake Tanganyika region with the London Missionary Society, who said, "I have told them that we are but part of their own family, separated long ago, and having been enlightened, have returned to do them good. I am glad to say that many are beginning to understand it to be so and are trusting us more than ever."¹⁵⁶

The early missionary efforts of the African American community were primarily focused on meeting the needs of African Americans in the USA. African Americans wanted to establish themselves in the USA and historically shunned any attempts to get them to leave America in significant numbers. This included leaving America for the purpose of evangelizing Africa. However, as missionaries, like Livingstone, reported on the conditions in Africa, African Americans responded by sending some of their resources.

Some African Americans did emigrate to Africa. However, many more chose to migrate within the USA, rather than go to Africa. They moved from southern agricultural based economies to northern and western industrial based economies. These new communities of African Americans within the USA became the primary mission fields of African American denominations. Booker T. Washington gives this

¹⁵⁶ Hemans to Thompson, general secretary of the London Missionary Society, 16 September 1891, CWM, SOAS, Central Africa Files, microfiche 121, row b.

impression of emigration during a trip to England, “In the House of Commons, which we visited several times, we met Sir Henry M. Stanley. I talked with him about Africa and its relation to the American Negro, and after my interview with him I became more convinced than ever that there was no hope of the American Negro’s improving his condition by emigrating to Africa.”¹⁵⁷ Stanley painted a negative picture of the difficult conditions he encountered while traveling in Africa. His reports had a very different effect on Washington than those of Livingstone.¹⁵⁸ Washington believed, as Stanley probably would have agreed, that the mass emigration of African Americans to Africa was not a profitable idea at that time. However, he also believed, as Livingstone did, that missionary involvement in Africa could have a positive impact.

The development of a stronger sense of identity within the African American community was greatly needed in the late 1910s and early 1920s, because the struggle for racial equality in America was at a low point. African American missionaries returned to the USA fired with zeal to raise funds for Africa, to help African students get education in the USA, and if possible to return to Africa themselves.

The Hemans expressed their affinity with the East Africans by adopting an East African as their son. Cheek, married, Rachel Chimpere, a member of the Yao

¹⁵⁷ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 285.

¹⁵⁸ Washington’s impressions of Livingstone’s reports are in ‘David Livingstone and the Negro,’ *International Review of Missions*, vol. 2, no. 6, April 1913, 226. In these quotes Washington states that Livingstone made him aware of his responsibility to Africa but in the above quote Washington states that Stanley made him loathe to go there. Stanley and Livingstone obviously saw Africa from different perspectives.

tribe. Cheek and Emma Delaney also helped three Africans, Daniel Malekebu, Matthew and Frederick Njilima, to study in the USA. It was, partially, the result of the Pan-Africanist beliefs of African American missionaries that caused them to see Africans and African Americans as people who would rise or fall together. If the African was degraded then the African American, as well as all humanity, was degraded also and if one rose then he must help lift up the other.

Education

Both East Africans and African Americans agreed that education was key to uplifting their peoples. African Americans have historically valued education according to the president of Tuskegee Institute, Robert R. Moton. He wrote in 1930:

Negroes have been avid for education ever since emancipation as well as before. Restrained from it till then by compulsion, the first manifestation of freedom was the clamour of all ages for education. It was everywhere regarded as the white man's talisman in the acquisition of power and wealth and position. In this he shares the common belief of democracy: this was his first qualification for citizenship, his faith in education."¹⁵⁹

Education may have been the "white man's talisman," according to Moton, but to others it was a political instrument used to oppress the weak.¹⁶⁰ When it became

¹⁵⁹ Robert R. Moton, *What The Negro Thinks* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1930), 40.

¹⁶⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 10. Freire disagreed with 'domesticization' or a type of education which stops people from thinking for themselves. He saw this type of education as a political instrument used by oppressive societies to maintain a 'culture of silence' among the oppressed. See also King, *Pan-Africanism*, 11. King states, 'The education of a dependent race had in fact once and for all been shown to be very much a political affair.'

clear that it was knowledge and not race that gave whites power, many Africans and African Americans determined to obtain as much education as possible. They had learned through years of oppression that being controlled in the type of education they could obtain kept them in a state of perpetual servitude. This quote by Booker T. Washington illustrates this point:

As long as a man is ignorant, untrained and helpless, slavery, in some form or other, under some disguise or other, is pretty likely to manifest itself. I might go still further and say that physical slavery, the slavery that holds a man in subjection by force, may be abolished, but there will remain the slavery based on ignorance. From slavery, in some form or other, there is no escape except in education.¹⁶¹

Some European missionaries, regardless of race, believed that once missionaries of African descent learned how knowledge could be used, then they would be able to become self-governing. The distinctive thing about African American missionaries was that they tended to see this process toward self-governance as being completed in a relatively short period of time.¹⁶² A prime example of this was John Chilembwe founder of the Providence Industrial Mission in Nyasaland which was sponsored by the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board.¹⁶³

Kenyan nationalist, Bildad Kaggia, stated the value of education this way, “Education was the magic through which the mzungu managed to rule Africans in

¹⁶¹ Washington, ‘David Livingstone,’ 231.

¹⁶² For an explanation of the delays that European mission agencies made in giving Africans leadership, see John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), chapter 8 ‘The Origins of Independency.’

¹⁶³ Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, 146.

Kenya. As soon as Africans learned this magic, they would be able to rule themselves.”¹⁶⁴ The type of education African American missionaries took to East Africa was designed to elevate the people mentally and in terms of identity and selfhood. This naturally concerned colonial officials in Kenya who were committed to maintaining the status quo.

King implies that the quality of education offered to East Africans by Yergan and his YMCA colleagues had something to do with the rejection of their requests to re-enter Kenya. He states, “...if it was later to become a cause of rancour that American Negroes were no longer allowed into East Africa to teach, the reason lay partly in the conspicuous success of their first Negro educational mission, and in the team’s knowledge that they had the enthusiastic support and good will of the local Africans.”¹⁶⁵ It was partially the success of Yergan and his colleagues as educational missionaries that may have doomed them in the eyes of the colonial officials. The colonial officials may have thought that if East Africans could get educated, the way Yergan and his colleagues were, then they might soon demand equal pay, equal social treatment and equal representation in legislative councils.

Following their departure from East Africa, five of the thirteen missionaries in this research became professional educators.¹⁶⁶ Lack of alternative job opportunities led many African Americans into the teaching profession during this

¹⁶⁴ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 70.

¹⁶⁵ King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, 61.

¹⁶⁶ Hemans, Delaney, Yergan, Stanley and Simons.

time. However, having gone to Africa as recent graduates of various USA institutions, they returned as experienced educators convinced of the importance of their profession.

It is true that African American missionaries sometimes shared negative images of Africa when they returned to the USA. Some thought that this would help raise more money for Africa. This was a common practice among missionaries in the western world at the turn of the 20th century. According to Booker T. Washington, many African Americans already held these negative images of Africa.¹⁶⁷ To hear them repeated by missionaries must have reinforced them in the minds of many people.

However, more often than not, African American missionaries helped to correct misconceptions about Africa held by people in their home communities.¹⁶⁸ They used letters, pictures, artifacts and particularly stories of their experiences in East Africa to teach the African American community about Africa. Some, like C.C. Boone, missionary to the Congo, wrote books to try and educate African Americans about Africa.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Washington, 'David Livingstone,' 224.

¹⁶⁸ See quote by Emma Delaney in footnote 85, '...yet all these [difficulties] are not to be compared with the many many blessings our Heavenly Father, has showered on me.' Also see Cheek's statement in footnote 86, 'If you mean, as I take it you do, that the danger was from the natives themselves, I must say you have a popular conception of those people, which is altogether wrong.'

¹⁶⁹ Clinton C. Boone, *Congo, As I Saw It* (New York: J.J. Little and Ives Company, 1927), v. Boone states, 'The many erroneous ideas held by the people at home in regard to African Missions has led me to write this little story.'

Beyond their desire to correct misconceptions about Africa, African American missionaries and their boards were willing to release responsibility for their mission stations to African leadership. This resulted in even more leadership development among Africans.¹⁷⁰ Congregationalist, Rufus Anderson, wrote in 1870, “As soon as the mission church has a native pastor, the responsibilities of self-government should be devolved upon it. Mistakes, perplexities, and sometimes scandals, there will be; but it is often thus that useful experience is gained, even in churches here at home.”¹⁷¹ Anderson’s ideas of 130 years ago would be widely accepted today, but not at the turn of the 20th century. African American missionaries were in favor of Anderson’s methodology and, because of colonial restrictions placed on their presence in East Africa, implemented it sooner than even they expected.

African American missionaries went to East Africa as an expression of the African American community’s desire to share a portion of its resources with Africa. Of the fifteen African Americans who went to East Africa during this period, two died and are buried in Dar es Salaam, some lost their children, all experienced sickness and disease. To varying degrees they all suffered for following their

¹⁷⁰ Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 39,164. Donovan, missionary to Tanzania, stated, ‘...the gospel is the affair of the missionary, and the interpretation of the gospel is the affair of the people who hear that gospel.’ It should be noted that at the end of WWI there was a general shortage of missionaries due to the estimated 10 million fatalities of the war. As a result of this some missions were forced to turn over responsibility for their mission stations to Africans. However, African American mission boards were generally in the habit of turning over their mission stations to African leadership prior to WWI.

¹⁷¹ Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1870), 112.

'calling.' Many of them shared the view of African American missionary C.C.

Boone as he concluded his missionary career in the Congo:

I do not regret a single sacrifice that I have made for the redemption of Africa and if I had ten thousand other lives I would be delighted to spend them all to lift up the fallen and care for the dying in Africa.¹⁷²

There is much that can be learned from the successes and failures of these early African American missionaries. They were motivated by a mixture of factors such as calling from God, race, African identity and education. There were frustrations and disappointments in their lives that they had to overcome daily, as well as joys and successes. Overcoming these difficulties required African American missionaries to have a Christ-like attitude of servanthood. This included the willingness to work alongside and build national leadership to eventually replace themselves.

¹⁷² Boone, *Congo*, 43.

CHAPTER V

RETHINKING LE ZOUTE: THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION IN AFRICA IN 1926

Never in the history of missions has there been such an important Christian conference held in the interest of Christianizing Africa as that held in Le Zoute, Belgium, Sept. 14-21.¹

J.E. East

This statement concerning the International Missionary Council (IMC) sponsored conference held in 1926 represents East's perception of its importance. East was the missions secretary of the largest African American denomination in the USA at that time, the National Baptist Convention. Therefore, his view of the conference as a major event for African American missions was probably accurate even though the rest of the attendees of the conference may have seen the conference in a different light.

Many other African American mission boards also saw the Le Zoute conference as a prime opportunity to express to the world their hopes for a greater role in the evangelization of Africa. They went to great expense to send specially selected representatives to the conference. Their objective was to build the best case possible for African American missionaries to Africa. This chapter will evaluate the message that these African American representatives brought to the conference and the results that came from their message being heard. It will also evaluate the work of Max Yergan in South Africa.

¹ Editorial in *Mission Herald* (hereafter cited as *MH*), vol. 29, no. 9, October 1926, 5. The editor of this magazine at the time of this issue was J.E. East.

Edwin W. Smith, official historian of the conference, provided a general overview of the meetings in his book *The Christian Mission in Africa* (1926). However, the key to understanding the African American contribution is in the manuscripts of speeches and discussions of the conference itself.² These will include some British, North American, African, German, Swiss and Dutch evaluations of the conference as well as the African American evaluations themselves.

It should be made clear that the Le Zoute conference was not primarily about African American missionaries gaining access to Africa. It was primarily about co-operation between colonial governments and mission agencies in the type of education they would offer in Africa.³ The issue of African American missionaries was placed on the agenda of this conference as a secondary issue. However, the African American mission boards saw this conference as an opportunity to present their case to a wider audience.⁴ Apparently there were no avenues in America to get this done or all avenues had been exhausted at this point. This conference was important to fulfilling the hopes of African American mission agencies to expand their mission work in Africa as this editorial in *Mission Herald* indicates, “The great International Conference on African Missions to be held in Belgium in the near

² The International Missionary Council documents from the Le Zoute conference are held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (hereafter cited as IMC, SOAS).

³ The IMC, SOAS archive put the manuscripts of the Le Zoute conference under the general category of African Education.

⁴ The African American mission agencies may have seen this opportunity to present their case much as the YMCA had seen the request of General Van der Venter to send seven African American YMCA secretaries to East Africa during WWI to help with the troops and carriers there. See General Van der Venter’s comments starting on chapter 3, footnote 146.

future is destined to be one of the most important and influential conventions ever held on foreign missions.”⁵

Background of Le Zoute conference

When former President Theodore Roosevelt went on his great safari in East Africa in 1909, he commented on the value of education for the African:

One of the government farms was being run by an educated colored man from Jamaica, and we were shown much courtesy by a colored man from our own country who was practising as a doctor. No one could fail to be impressed with the immense advance these men represented as compared with the native negro; and indeed to an American who must necessarily think much of the race problem at home, it is pleasant to be made to realize in vivid fashion the progress the American negro has made, by comparing him with the negro who dwells in Africa untouched, or but lightly touched, by white influence.⁶

Most missionaries would have agreed with Roosevelt in terms of the value of education for uplifting Africa. They probably would have disagreed on just how much education was needed before the missionary could be replaced by an African worker.

Even colonial governments generally admitted that education in Africa was important at this time. They willingly joined with the mission boards in attending the conference at Le Zoute. Some of the colonial representatives were:

E.B. Denham, Colonial Secretary, Kenya Colony

⁵ J.E. East, editorial, *Mission Herald*, vol. 29, no. 7, August 1926, 4.

⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails* (New York: St Martins Press, 1910 reprinted 1988 editor Peter Capstick), 10. Roosevelt states, ‘In Kijabe, I spent several exceedingly interesting hours at the American Industrial Mission. Its head, Mr. Hurlburt had called on me in Washington at the White House, in the preceding October...but I am sure that missionary work of the Kijabe kind will be an indispensable factor in the slow uplifting of the natives. This is full recognition of the fact that industrial training is a foundation stone in the effort to raise ethical and moral standards.’ p. 174 See also King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, 1, for a further evaluation of Roosevelt’s visit to Kenya.

Edward C.F. Garraway, former Resident Commissioner, Basutoland Protectorate
 Louis Franck, Membre de la Chambre des Représentants
 J.L. Gilks, Director of Medical and Sanitary Service, Kenya
 C.T. Loram, Commissioner for Native Affairs, Union of South Africa
 F.D. Lugard, former governor of Nigeria
 M. le Vice-Gouverneur Marzorati, Ruanda-Urundi
 Général De Meulemeester, Ex-Gouverneur du Congo Belge
 Rev. Pere Mortier, Membre du Conseil Colonial, Belgium
 S.A.E. d'Oliviera, Portuguese Consul in Belgium
 Hanns Vischer, Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, Colonial Office, London
 W.T. Welsh, Chief Magistrate, Transkeian Territory⁷

Educationist A. Victor Murray goes even further in stating that co-operation between government and mission meant both were working toward the same goal:

The rapid development of co-operation between Government and missions both in idea and in actual machinery was the inspiration behind a special conference in 1926 which was held at Le Zoute, in Belgium, to consider African problems. Here the work of the Christian missionary and that of the Government servant were seen to be for the same end—the coming of the Kingdom of God....It [Le Zoute] laid down that the education of the Native is the proper function of Government, but that as no education of Natives was of any value without religion, it was best to leave it in the hands of the missionaries, aided by Government subsidy and organization under Government direction.⁸

Philanthropist Anson Phelps Stokes chaired the committee at Le Zoute in which African American involvement in missions to Africa was discussed.⁹ Some

⁷ Edwin W. Smith, *The Christian Mission in Africa* (London: International Missionary Council, 1926), 187,188. These colonial representatives were co-opted delegates not being a part of any mission board. They were able to address the colonial governments' position on African American missionaries.

⁸ A. Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush* (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1929 reprints 1938, 1967), 261,262.

⁹ Smith, *The Christian Mission*, 176. Smith wrote, 'Mr. Oldham presented a recommendation of the Business Committee that a Committee be appointed to consider the possibility of sending American Negroes to Africa as missionaries. It was agreed to appoint the following Committee: Dr. Phelps Stokes (Chairman), Dr. Anet, Dr. A.J. Brown, Bishop Campbell, Bishop Cannon, Rev. W.W. Cash, Bishop Clair, Rev. N.T. Clerk, M. Couve, the Hon. E.B. Denham, Dr. Dillard, Rev. J. Dube, Dr. J.

delegates favoured co-operation between missions and government in order to avoid wasteful competition between them.¹⁰ However, other individuals were gravely concerned about the implications that accepting government support could have on the evangelistic work of missions.

Roland Allen, formerly a missionary with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in China, but after 1905 an independent missionary to Africa, was one who objected to co-operation between government and mission. He wrote in a pamphlet critical of the conference at Le Zoute in 1927:

The Conference discussed a large number of subjects, but I think that it is perfectly plain that the real object of its meeting was to endorse a proposal to co-operate with Governments in the education of the peoples of Africa which has been persistently and vigorously advocated in missionary speeches and magazines for some considerable time.¹¹

Allen was committed to Christian education and was not critical of the conference because of its focus on this. Nevertheless, he felt that co-operation between colonial governments and mission agencies would distract missionaries from their primary

East, Bishop Gregg, Rev. J.W.L. Hofmeyr, Dr. J. Hope, Bishop Johnson, Dr. Johnston, Dr. Jesse Jones, Dr. Lerrigo, Dr. Loram, Sir Frederick Lugard, Dr. McCoy, Mr. Maclennan, Rev. J.C. Olden, Dr. Richter, Rev. E.W. Riggs, Mr. W.T. Welsh, Rev. A.W. Wilkie, Mr. Max Yergan, Dr. Fraser, Mr. Oldham and Dr. Warnshuis.' A very diverse group of people.

¹⁰ Ibid., 134. Stokes goes on to elaborate about co-operation, 'It did not require the giving up by co-operating agencies of their own independence or special points of view, but merely meant uniting for the accomplishment of certain tasks which they all believed in....Co-operation is specially needed in the African continent because of the magnitude of the field; the inclusiveness of the task; the crying need of Africa....The accomplishment of such a gigantic task, which means helping Africa to become Christian in spirit and in life, is impossible unless government, missionary societies, Native leaders and public-spirited men of affairs all unite in tasks which can be best accomplished through a union of forces.'

¹¹ Roland Allen, *Le Zoute: A Critical Review of 'The Christian Mission in Africa,'* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927), 5.

objective of evangelism. He stated, concerning the recommendation of the conference to co-operate with government in education:

What the passage before us really means is that missionaries are invited to forsake their proper work, to join with governments, and to accept Government aid, to reach a goal which is confessedly not their goal, by the suggestion that when they have arrived there, they will then be able to go on to their proper goal alone....When they accepted money which was given by people who would give nothing for evangelistic work, then they began to find these terms to express their Gospel, and then they began to preach what the terms expressed.¹²

Allen was vehement about his position to co-operation and he states it simply, “The Conference refused to face the plain truth that Christian education can only be given to men who want to be Christians.”¹³

As missions leader Rufus Anderson stated as early as 1870, “Education, schools, the press, and whatever else goes to make up the working system, are held in strict subordination to the planting and building up of effective working churches....The proper test of success in missions, is not the progress of civilization, but the evidence of a religious life.”¹⁴ Allen probably would have agreed with this.

¹² Ibid., 12,15.

¹³ Ibid. 12. Allen published this booklet in response to the Le Zoute conference. This final quote from him summarises his position, ‘The establishment of the Church, the preaching of Christ over wide areas tarries because societies do not give their whole attention to one thing, one fundamental thing. They turn aside from that to educate ‘the people.’ When they do that, when they accept government grants to do that, when they preen themselves on the approval of governments, on their success in doing that, they are leaving their proper work to do the work of governments.’ p. 39.

¹⁴ Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1870), 113.

In spite of these disagreements the agenda of the conference was set by the planning committee and freedom was given to add topics or speakers that the Business Committee deemed appropriate:

It seems desirable that there should be a clear understanding that the Business Committee will have power to change the order of subjects or make alterations in the programme, which developments in the interval may appear to make necessary. Such changes might be necessitated by the falling out of some speaker, or the unexpected addition to the membership of the Conference of some distinguished guest, or by evidence that some question was greatly exercising the minds of some of the delegates to the Conference.¹⁵

Therefore as the conference evolved African Americans were given the opportunity to address their issues. Although the primary issue of the Le Zoute conference was education in Africa, the African American delegates were allowed to expand the agenda to include their missionaries to Africa. It was not that education was seen as lacking importance by African American mission boards, but instead these boards saw gaining access to colonial Africa for their missionaries as a more important issue. The importance of education to these boards as well as to the individual missionaries they sent out has already been clearly shown.¹⁶ However, what good was education if African Americans could not get access to the African.

African American mission board secretaries knew that most colonial governments had placed bans on African Americans entering their colonies. They knew that they needed the support of the European-American mission agencies to get the colonial governments to reverse their discriminatory policies. Leroy Fitts,

¹⁵ Le Zoute conference on Education in Africa, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute files, microfiche no. 200, row a, p. 17.

¹⁶ See Chapter 4.

historian of the (African American) Lott Carey Missionary Convention, wrote about the difficulties his mission faced in sending missionaries to Africa at that time:

From the outset, the Convention met with several difficulties in its attempt to expand a program to larger foreign areas. The primary difficulty was the political attitudes of foreign powers toward Black people in the United States. Politically, the foreign powers, particularly the colonial empires, were reluctant to open doors to Black missionaries from the United States. This issue came to focus at the Foreign Mission Conference at Le Zoute, Belgium.¹⁷

The conference 'Committee on American Negroes and Africa' submitted the following statement to the Business Committee of the conference for inclusion in the official minutes. It was later edited, before publication in Smith's book, to exclude any mention of 'Pan-Africanism' or the 'Garvey movement' as causes of opposition to sending African Americans missionaries:

Opposition to the sending of American Negroes to Africa is due mainly to three factors:-(a) The unrest caused by the so-called Pan-African and Garvey movements. (b) The antagonism to Government of certain American Negroes in Africa in past years with resulting serious disturbances in some cases. (c) The failure of certain American Negroes in Africa in past years.¹⁸

Who opposed the sending of these missionaries to Africa, Colonial governments or mission agencies? It has been shown that both co-operated in enforcing color bars on African American missionaries.¹⁹ Although this quote specifically mentions 'Pan-

¹⁷ Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1994), 81.

¹⁸ Le Zoute committee minutes, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute microfiche 197, row c, p. 1. These committee minutes were prepared and signed by Anson Phelps Stokes. According to Smith, *The Christian Mission*, 179, 'The resolutions of the Committee on the American Negroes in Africa were presented by the Chairman, Canon Anson Phelps Stokes, and were agreed to, as later amended.'

¹⁹ See chapter 4, footnote 26 for an explanation of how the British colonial government and the International Missionary Council worked together to exclude African American missionaries from Africa.

Africanism and the Garvey movement' it is vague about exactly why these movements were considered dangerous. It seems to imply a clear connection between these movements and the African American community in general, which in actuality was not the case. It also seems vague about who the 'certain American Negroes' were who opposed the government or who failed as missionaries. Certainly there were examples of white missionaries who failed in Africa or who had political views different from the colonial government.²⁰ This statement shows the basic difficulty of the conference to make a distinction between African Americans who were involved in the Garvey movement or Pan-Africanism and those who were not.²¹

Historian Harold Isaacs states of Garvey's movement in America, "By 1920 he claimed four million dues-paying members; by 1923, six million. Even his most ardent belittlers admitted he had hundreds of thousands of followers."²² Although a significant portion of the approximately 12 million African Americans, at that time, may have joined Garvey's movement, he in no way represented the majority of these people. In fact quite a few of the more educated African Americans were strongly

²⁰ Joseph Booth would be a good example here but certainly there were others who failed as well.

²¹ The neurotic attitude of colonial officials, settlers and missionaries toward any movements by Africans or African Americans that were not closely supervised by whites was fed in part by a number of incidents between 1906-1926, including the Zulu rising of 1906-7, the Chilembwe rising of 1915, the Kimbangu rising of 1921. Colonial officials were cautious about independence and therefore, generally saw literature encouraging independent thinking as seditious. The fact that not all African Americans were in favor of radical change did not occur. Conversely, not all whites were suspicious of the African's desire for self improvement and some even saw it as the natural consequence of educational development. See T. Jack Thompson, *Education and Northern Malawi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 243, statement by Donald Fraser, "Education must necessarily rouse discontent with poor conditions and the restlessness of awakening natural consciousness."

²² Harold R. Isaacs, *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York: The John Day Company, 1963), 133.

opposed to Garvey's methods and philosophy. Isaacs explains the difficulties that many African Americans had with Garvey's ideology:

European colonial authorities in Africa kept an eye cocked on him from afar and kept his paper, *Negro World*, from entering their precincts. In the United States all the best-known leaders among Negroes and most of the educated, aspiring American Negro middle class reacted strongly against him as a West Indian interloper,...and, most of all, as a black racist who with brutal tongue and phrase rejected men of mixed descent more violently than he rejected the whites themselves.²³

By no means does Isaacs' analysis represent all African American views of Garvey's movement. There were some who saw benefits resulting from this movement.

Historian A.E. Elmes states:

Here is one thing [that Garvey's movement contributed], set this down to the eternal credit of Marcus Garvey that before him there has not been a man who stirred into expression the consciousness of the Negro peoples to the extent that he succeeded in doing—extent both in degree and geographical area over which his ideas swept. Negroes all over the world have come to think of themselves as a Race—one in hope and destiny, as never before. Now this I count to be a thing of high value.²⁴

This unifying factor of the Garvey movement was enough to concern most colonial officials whose system of government was sustained by promoting divisions among the people they governed. Therefore, colonial officials tended to see all African Americans as being sympathetic with Garvey's movement.

By the time of the Le Zoute conference in 1926 Garvey had already been convicted of mail fraud (1925) and was serving his sentence in the Atlanta Penitentiary. In 1927 he was pardoned and deported by President Coolidge. He died

²³ Ibid., 133,134.

²⁴ A.E. Elmes, 'Garvey and Garveyism—An Estimate,' *Marcus Garvey and The Vision of Africa*, ed. John H. Clark (New York: Random House, 1974), 125.

in London in 1940 at the age of fifty-three. According to Isaacs, "He [Garvey] went to prison, and his organization fell apart into fragments. The larger masses which had sought relief or escape through Garvey were forced to seek it elsewhere."²⁵

Although Garvey was disposed of, his movement still had an ideology that concerned the colonial officials and the mission agencies.

Prior to the conference it was evident to the organizers that the issue of African American missionaries would have to be addressed to some degree. The minutes of a planning meeting stated, "It was suggested that the subject of education should be introduced by Dr. Loram,...and that of co-operation between the races by Mr. Max Yergan."²⁶ Education in Africa was the key issue addressed at the Le Zoute conference, but African Americans like Yergan did not want to miss the opportunity to set the record straight concerning the issue of fair treatment of African American missionaries.

The African American and African participants

The selection of delegates to the conference was carefully thought through by the planning committee. In a pre-conference report it was stated about the

²⁵ Isaacs, *New World*, 139.

²⁶ International Missionary Council minutes, 2 June 1926 meeting at Edinburgh House London, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute conference files, microfiche 194, row c, p. 4. The American experience of education in the Southern United States was of particular interest to this conference in terms of its application to Africa. This same minute states, 'It was suggested that American experience in work on behalf of the Negroes in the United States should be made available for the Conference, and that an evening should be devoted to this subject.' p. 5 According to the invitation given to John Hope by J.H. Oldham education was the primary issue Hope was to address.

participants in the conference, "The general feeling was that numbers should, if possible, be kept down to 200 (plus 50 co-opted members)."²⁷ This number was felt to be the most that could be invited to allow effective discussion. The minutes go on to state, "It was agreed that efforts should be made to secure the attendance of government officials, leading educators, African leaders and representatives of the negro community in the United States."²⁸ The official purpose of the conference was, "to consider the present situation in Africa, the forces which are at work there and the responsibilities of the Christian Church in relation to this situation."²⁹ The committee states of those invited to the conference:

Those who will attend are almost without exception in their own spheres persons of such influence and power to direct policy that from the most practical point of view any deepened understanding of the African problem or fresh conviction that may come to individual members of the conference are bound to have far-reaching results.³⁰

Any conference planner might make a statement such as this one, particularly when one of the aims of the conference was to publicize the IMC as much as possible. This goal is stated in another minute of the conference planning committee, "Great emphasis was laid on the importance of arranging for such publicity with regard to the conference as would make its influence felt as widely as possible among Home

²⁷ Minutes of meeting in New York City, 6 February 1925, Le Zoute conference, IMC, SOAS, microfiche no. 193 row a, p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰ Minutes of planning committee meeting in New York City, 2 June 1926, IMC, SOAS, microfiche no. 194, row b, p. 2.

Churches.”³¹ From the list of participants it appeared that influential people from a broad cross section of the world did attend this conference:

The members numbered 221 in all. They were drawn from fourteen countries: Africa, America, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Almost every African territory was represented....Africa, as was right, sent some of her own sons. We may mention Mr. N.S.J. Ballanta, who is making a name for himself by his researches in African music; the Rev. N.T. Clerk, Synod clerk of the Scottish Mission in Gold Coast Colony; the Rev. John Dube, founder and principal of the Ohlange Institution in Natal and editor of a newspaper; and the Rev. Z.R. Mahabane, President of the National Congress of South Africa. A fine band of Afro-Americans brought experience to bear on the conditions in the land of their forefathers. One of them, Mr. Max Yergan, who as secretary of the Y.M.C.A. is working among students in South Africa, impressed the Conference deeply by the sincerity and restraint of his contributions.³²

Smith oddly lists Africa as one of the fourteen countries represented at the conference. The presence of only four black Africans out of 221 delegates at a conference that claimed to concern itself exclusively with Africa's people was seen as a weakness of the conference by Jack Thompson. He states:

It could well be argued, however, that over and above any shortcomings of policy, the most serious defect of Le Zoute was the composition of its delegates. With the exception of a few African-Americans, and about four black Africans, Le Zoute was basically a conference of Europeans talking about Africa; that this was so in the mid-1920s could in itself be seen as an indication of failure.³³

From the list of seven African American delegates to the conference: Max Yergan represented the YMCA as a Student Secretary for South Africa; John Hope

³¹ Minutes of planning committee meeting, 6 February 1925, IMC, SOAS, microfiche 193, row a, p. 2.

³² Smith, *The Christian Mission*, 25,26.

³³ T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 250.

was part of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society delegation; Althea Edmiston, was a representative of the Presbyterian Church in the (Southern) United States' Congo mission; Charles S. Graham,³⁴ corresponding secretary of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention; Elizabeth Bouey, Congo missionary and J.E. East, corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, and Dr. S.G. Atkins, President, Winston-Salem Teachers' College, North Carolina. As East wrote of the participants at the conference:

The Negro was well represented, both from Africa and America. Some were called there as consulting members. Among these were Prof. Atkins, president of a school in North Carolina; Mr. Max Yergan, Y.M.C.A. secretary; Revs. Dube and Mahamba of South Africa, plus one other gentleman from the West Coast whose name we happen not to have just now. Then there were the colored people sent by the respective boards of missionary organizations. The white boards who have colored churches affiliated in their denominations had representatives of colored people on hand. These included representatives of Southern and Northern Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. Representatives from the independent Negro churches of America were Dr. A.A.Graham, Lott Carrey Convention; Bishop Gregg of the A.M.E. Church; Mrs. Elizabeth Coles Bouey and your humble servant, from the National Baptist Convention. Dr. John Hope was sent by the Home Mission Board.³⁵

It would appear from this quote that there were many more African Americans in attendance at the conference than those listed as official delegates. Since many of these were probably unofficial delegates to the conference it is difficult to say exactly how many there were and whether they were Africans or African Americans.

³⁴ Smith, *The Christian Mission*, 181. The Lott Carey Baptist Convention representative at Le Zoute is stated as being Dr. A.A. Graham but according to Leroy Fitts, historian of the Lott Carey Missionary Convention, his name was Dr. Charles S. Graham.

³⁵ J.E. East, editorial, *MH*, vol. 29, no. 9, October 1926, 5.

Max Yergan may have been returning to South Africa when he was recommended by Thomas J. Jones and Anson Phelps Stokes as an African American speaker who could be trusted to promote co-operation. Both Jones and Phelps Stokes of the Phelps Stokes Fund were in attendance at the conference. At a Le Zoute planning committee meeting, in March 1925, it was suggested that the Phelps Stokes Fund or other philanthropic funds might be asked to help towards the expenses of the conference.³⁶ Sixteen months later the conference received this response from the Phelps Stokes Fund, "Dr. Jones reported the action of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation appropriating \$2000 for bringing African delegates to the Conference; \$1500 for expenses of European delegates; and \$1500 toward the general expenses of the conference."³⁷ So, to a large extent the Le Zoute conference was funded by the Phelps-Stokes Fund. This may explain why the emphasis of this conference became 'education in Africa' since the Phelps-Stokes Fund was created to help educate people of African descent. In addition this fund strongly opposed both the 'Pan-African' views of people like DuBois and the 'back to Africa' views of Garvey.

John Hope, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, was invited to speak at Le Zoute on education by the conference co-ordinator J.H. Oldham. Oldham stated in a letter to Hope, dated 29 July 1926, "I write now to confirm the request already made that you should give an address at the Le Zoute Conference on Thursday 16 September. The main subject to be presented that evening will be the

³⁶ Minutes of an informal meeting of the planning committee, 17 March 1925, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute files, microfiche 193, row a, p. 3.

³⁷ Ibid. microfiche 194, row d, p. 4.

work of the General Education Board and related organizations in the South.”³⁸

Although Hope was asked to speak on education, he spoke not only as a college president, and Baptist (he was part of the American Baptist delegation), but he represented African Americans in general.

In addition to Hope, S.G. Atkins, President of Winston-Salem Teachers College, North Carolina was invited as a consultative member, not being affiliated with any particular mission board.

Althea Edmiston was one of a handful of African American missionaries serving with the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern). She was a member of the Luebo mission in the Congo founded by William H. Sheppard, and Samuel P. Lapsley, in the 1890s. Edmiston was a missionary in the Congo for over 34 years during which time she published a dictionary of the Bakuba language.³⁹

Charles S. Graham was corresponding secretary of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention which was named after the first African American Baptist missionary to Liberia. As an African American mission board, it had a policy of co-operation with white mission boards and particularly the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Leroy Fitts, historian of the Lott Carey Convention, indicated that the result of the ban on African American missionaries limited this mission’s work in the Congo to financial support of white missionaries.⁴⁰ According

³⁸ J.H. Oldham to John Hope, 29 July 1926, John Hope papers, LOC. See also footnote 42 of this chapter where East, secretary of the NBCFMB, states that Hope was seen as representing Baptist’s interest at the conference.

³⁹ Julia L. Kellersberger, *A Life For The Congo: The Story of Althea Brown Edmiston* (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1947), 170.

to Fitts the Lott Carey representatives at the conference sought to gain further access to Africa for African American missions. He writes, “Several Black Americans, including Rev. Charles S. Graham and Dr. O.J. Allen of the Lott Carey Convention, waged a friendly warfare for an open door to Negro missionary endeavors in Africa. Subsequently the conference appointed a ‘Committee on American Negroes and Africa.’”⁴¹

The National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board sent two delegates to the conference according to this article in the *Mission Herald*:

Mrs. Elizabeth Coles Bouey, a product of the Virginia Union University, who is to sail for Liberia early in September, has been appointed by our Board to pass Belgium and represent us at this conference. If the Secretary can be spared, he is also being urged to attend this conference. President John Hope, of Atlanta, GA will be there and will evidently do much in looking after the interest of our Board.⁴²

Bouey’s husband had died in Liberia, but she continued to serve in Liberia as a widow. It was at a missions meeting after the conference at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Anet that she discovered there was a cure for yaws. She states:

⁴⁰ Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy*, 108. This relationship between Lott Carey Convention and the American Baptists helped to send Dr. & Mrs. C.C. Boone to the Congo in 1901. ‘The presence of Dr. & Mrs. Boone in the Congo was the result of a cooperative project between the Lott Carey Convention and the Missionary Union in Boston. The plan was this: the Missionary Union was to furnish the field and house for the missionaries, and the Lott Carey Convention was to pay the missionaries salaries.’ p. 108 However, when Mrs Boone died, Dr. Boone returned to the USA in 1906 and because of the colonial ban on African American missionaries, the mission was left with no choice but to support a white missionary to keep the station going. p. 109.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 81. Dr. O.J. Allen may have been at the conference, but his name was not listed on the official registry of conference members found in Smith’s *The Christian Mission*, 180-188. Another attendant at the conference, Isaac Fisher, ‘attended the International Conference on the Christian Mission in Africa at Le Zoute, Belgium, in September 1926...Fisher’s writings on his travels throughout Africa captured the imagination of many Afro-Americans.’ In Manning Marable, ‘Ambiguous Legacy: Tuskegee’s ‘Missionary’ Impulse and Africa During the Moton Administration, 1915-1935,’ *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*, ed. Sylvia M. Jacobs (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 87.

⁴² J.E. East, editorial, *MH*, vol. 29, no. 7, August 1926, 4.

I was asked as to diseases on the West Coast. In answering I mentioned the yaws. 'Oh, there is a positive cure for that,' said Mme. Anet. 'Dr. Bargar,' she continued, 'knows all about it, and I am sure will tell you all you need to know....' I met her husband, who did give me much valuable information. It may be that others working in Liberia know the cure for yaws, but this is the first time I've ever heard a positive cure....I am enclosing all particulars as to the medicines. I do pray that the Board may soon send out a supply, and may we too be soon doing as others-winning souls for Christ by curing their bodies of this horrible disease.⁴³

This shows that although the conference was significant for its focus on education, there were other benefits that came from attending.

There was an historical rivalry between the NBCFMB and the Lott Carey Convention, due to a split having occurred between them in 1897. Nevertheless, in the case of the Le Zoute conference, this old rivalry was set aside for the sake of more African American missionaries gaining access to Africa.

In addition to the above mentioned African American delegates the conference planning committee wanted a token African presence at the conference. The minutes of one of their meetings states, "Of the 6 places reserved for Africans, the Rev. Z.R.Mahabane and Mr. R.V. Lelope Thema had accepted....The Rev. John Dube had been invited but had not yet given a definite answer....Confirmation of the above was given, with power to invite Professor Jabavu to take the place of Mr. Mahabane if the latter failed."⁴⁴

⁴³ Elizabeth Coles Bouey, *MH*, vol. 29, no. 12, January 1927, 38.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the conference planning committee, n.d., IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute files, microfiche 194, row c, p. 10. Emphasis in this quote is in the original. Aggrey was invited to the conference but was unable to take time away from his PhD studies at Columbia University. See Smith, *Aggrey of Africa*, (London: 1929)

It could be said of these representative that they were the best that the African and African American communities could put forward at that time. The hopes of future African American missions to Africa and the world went with these delegates. They were chosen for their experience on the mission field, for their knowledge as mission administrators and for their ability as educators.

The message African Americans and Africans brought to the conference

Getting to the conference was one thing, but being heard by the conference was quite another. The message African American missionaries wanted to present to the conference was visual as well as verbal. They brought with them records of success and longevity in African missions in Congo (Edmiston), Liberia (Bouey) and South Africa (Yergan). They brought knowledge of mission administration (East and Graham). Finally they brought understanding of academia in John Hope, President of Morehouse College in Atlanta. They also brought a record of patience in waiting year after year for an audience with these mission agencies. This patience, no doubt, had an impact on the decision of the conference to include their requests on the agenda. The issue of African American missionaries had been raised at the International Missionary Council sponsored conference at Mohonk in 1921 and again at their meeting at Oxford, England in July 1923.⁴⁵ However, in neither of these

⁴⁵ See footnote 59 in this chapter for a statement by Swiss missionary Oettli about the issue of African American missionaries arising at the IMC Mohonk conference in 1921. See also the *Minutes of the*

previous instances did the African American presence compare with the delegation that attended Le Zoute.

As this article in the *Mission Herald* states about the conference, “...committees were appointed to discuss the important issues of American Negroes going to Africa and of the South African situation, so that resolutions could be formed respecting the same.”⁴⁶ African Americans wanted the conference to help lift colonial bans on African American missionaries and for European-American missionaries to treat African American missionaries as brothers in Christ when encountered on the mission field.

John Hope stated in his address at Le Zoute:

By the end of the slavery period Negroes had already acquired great experience in the management of their churches even though their churches were under the direction of white people in the South. In the North, so far had some of the Negroes advanced that at least one group had drawn out of the white organization in order that it might have the own management of its church life.

Today we are graduating from our colleges about 500 Negro students annually. We have a population of twelve million Negroes in America. The spirit of service is among us but it must have a greater field for unselfish expression than America yields. We can [not] continue to teach Negroes to enter upon careers of service yet giving them no adequate outlet for this expression.⁴⁷

Committee of the International Missionary Council at Oxford, England 9-16 July 1923 (London: Edinburgh House, 1923), 35. The issue of African American missionaries was on the agenda at this meeting also. A generally positive statement was made following the IMC meeting at Oxford that was very similar to the one resulting from the Le Zoute conference. It recommended that only specially picked African American missionaries should be sent and they should be supervised by well established mission agencies.

⁴⁶ *MH*, vol. 29, no. 9, October 1926, 5.

⁴⁷ John Hope address at Le Zoute, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute conference files, microfiche 210, row b, p. 3,6. Two years later at the IMC conference in Jerusalem (1928) Hope made a similar plea as at Le Zoute, ‘The Negro shows little resentment. That was not that he does not know and feel, but rather that he downright believes in Jesus Christ... Might not Missionary Boards and Governments give American Negroes an opportunity in Africa to work on the problem there? It would be a tragedy if

It was an honour for Hope, along with Yergan, to be the only two African Americans invited to address general sessions of this conference. They both spoke as representatives of the African American community. As Christians they expressed the desire of the African American community to contribute a portion of its resources to helping fulfill the Great Commission, “Go into all the world and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19). Hope concluded his message at the conference with the following appeal to the mission agencies at the conference:

The problem in Africa is gigantic. It requires for its solution millions of money, thousands of men and women, and the wisdom of very God himself. In your arrangements during the next few years see whether you might trust us to send into Africa young negro men and women to help that continent at the same time giving to American Negroes that healthy reaction which comes from unselfish effort, the nobler life that comes through Christian devotion.⁴⁸

John Dube, founding member and first secretary of the African National Congress in South Africa, wrote a detailed evaluation of the conference for his constituents in South Africa. In it he mentioned the African American presence at the conference. He remembered this line from Max Yergan’s speech, “Africa is

they were limited only to the saving of their own skins. Let them have a nobler calling.’ p. 4,5 Manuscript located in the IMC archives Box 261005 Jerusalem Conference files, World Council of Churches library, Geneva. Max Yergan’s speech at the Jerusalem conference is also located in this file and is similar in thrust to his Le Zoute speech. One can only speculate that giving the same messages year after year, with little response, did not frustrate them and possibly contribute to Yergan’s shift to socialism in 1936.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 8. Hope’s theme was repeated by Canon Phelps Stokes in his address in Smith, *Christian Mission*, 135 which states, ‘Co-operation is specially needed in the African continent because of the magnitude of the field; the inclusiveness of the task; the crying need of Africa. In dealing with a group of people representing nearly one-tenth of the population of the globe, the problem is nothing short of bringing the Kingdom of God into a great continent. The accomplishment of such a gigantic task, which means helping Africa to become Christian in spirit and in life, is impossible unless government, missionary societies, Native leaders and public-spirited men of affairs all unite in tasks which can be best accomplished through a union of forces.’ This idea of co-operation was heavily emphasized at the Le Zoute conference. It seems ironic that in spite of the great needs in Africa, these mission boards found it important to expend their resources to exclude African American missionaries.

willing for co-operation. The cry of 'Africa for the African' finds no real response in the African, who is by nature generous and patient."⁴⁹ It would appear from this statement that Yergan was seeking to distance himself from the idea of Pan-Africanism that was seen by colonial and mission agencies as one of the causes for exclusion of African American missions from Africa. He may have wanted to show the conference that not all African Americans followed Garvey's ideals and that he was one who knew the value of co-operation. This was a different Yergan from the one who resigned from the YMCA ten years later, in 1936.

Dube seemed to have been impressed with the report of the Presbyterian Church of the US and stated, "Mr. Washburn (S. Presbyterian Board, USA) spoke of their success in sending the Black and the White to work together in Africa. It has its problems, but no more so than two Whites!"⁵⁰ Dube was obviously intrigued by this statement by a white missionary that a racially mixed mission station in the Congo had worked just as effectively as an all white one.

⁴⁹ John Dube's report on the Le Zoute conference, IMC, SOAS, Le Zoute files, microfiche 202, row a, p. 18.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20. Washburn was himself a missionary to the Congo according to the list of participants to Le Zoute in Smith, *The Christian Mission in Africa*, 180. This statement is supported by the presence of African American Presbyterian missionary to the Congo, Mrs. Althea Edmiston, who served along with her husband for over 34 years on what was often a racially mixed station. Although the Southern Presbyterians (PCUS) may have had a better record than most missions in employing African American missionaries it was not exempt from racism in placing them in stations where white missionaries had difficulty surviving healthwise. As African American historian, Walter Williams, wrote, 'Afro-American missionaries were sent by white churches only to tropical areas of western and central Africa, where disease took a greater toll on white missionaries. Consequently, there were no white-sponsored black churchmen in healthy areas like the Kenya Highlands or South Africa. This distinction points out the self-serving nature of white church use of Afro-Americans: blacks were not deemed to be of worth unless health factors prevented the use of white clergy.' *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 9. On the other hand Williams had this to say about the PCUS Luebo mission in Congo, 'William M. Morrison, who took over the leadership at Luebo (Congo) seemed unprejudiced toward his black coworkers, and he aided race relations by his approach to missionary work.' p. 27.

One of the most significant impressions Dube had of the Le Zoute conference was of the African American delegation as a whole. He wrote:

One of the outstanding manifestations of the Conference to me was the almost inconceivable progress made by the Negro in America, as shown by their representatives in Le Zoute, whose condition at the outset was even worse than our own. We still dwell under our native skies. We live and work at home. The American Negro was carried from us to a foreign land, and was forced to develop under a strange and unfriendly environment. The people were all slaves more than eighty years ago. "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." My dear people, we need not be discouraged. There are millions of our friends in Europe and America, and even in the islands of the sea. Their representatives pleaded our cause in the Conference; they are pleading it before the courts of the world with a fervour and consecration surpassed only by the loving sympathy of our God. No one can mingle with them eye to eye and face to face without being impressed that in soul they are one with us, and that we can depend upon them to be with us to the end.⁵¹

This quote not only represents the impact of the reconnection between Africa and African Americans, but the connection between Africa and her friends world-wide. Dube was also referring to whites like Donald Fraser, Scottish missionary and chairman of the Le Zoute conference, as a friend of Africa. Dube states of Fraser's work as the conference chairman, "A simple love of humanity shone through him and his works and his enthusiasm for the Africans, combined with his knowledge of them, was deeply appreciated by all the Africans present."⁵²

Dube concludes his personal impressions of Le Zoute with this very positive evaluation:

⁵¹ Ibid., 29. It is not clear whether Dube was speaking of the African Americans only or of all those regardless of color who stood for Africa as the next quote seems to indicate.

⁵² Ibid., 23.

I feel as I have never felt before that African problems, difficult as they are of adjustment, are in the hands of her friends, and that our Divine Father is leading her to a future fraught with great possibilities.

Nevertheless, I return from the Conference feeling that the best thought of the world is directed towards our release and freedom from these hardships. God is guiding the nations marvellously. They see their own wrongs to us, and are beginning to confess their sins of injustice to us before the Almighty God. I am thoroughly convinced that our change will soon come and I have a greater passion to work for my Master than I ever had before.⁵³

It is significant that Dube sensed a repentance on the part of the delegates. He seems to have left the conference with greater hope for a new day for Africa. It can reasonably be speculated, from his report, that he did not expect to wait another 70 years to gain freedom in South Africa. This sense of a change having occurred in the attitude of Christians at Le Zoute was also expressed by other African American delegates.

J.E. East wrote his impression of Le Zoute in *Mission Herald*:

We think it can be truthfully said that the white missionaries who had been fairly well united in their opposition towards colored missionaries going to Africa were weakening in their position and becoming more inclined to accept and tolerate the appointment of American Negro missionaries for the African field.⁵⁴

It would be fair to say that East, as were most African American participants at Le Zoute, was positive about the result of the conference. His concluding statement makes this point clear, "If even one-hair of the sympathy is shown on the field that was manifested in this great conference, then untold good is being done."⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁴ J.E. East, *MH*, vol. 29, no. 9, October 1926, 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 6.

European and American perceptions of the conference

It should be clear that the decisions of the International Missionary Council had influence on European-American mission boards. This letter sent by IMC secretary, Warnshuis to the Methodist Episcopal Church South subsequent to the July 1923 meeting at Oxford indicated that the MECS was looking for direction from Warnshuis concerning African American missionaries:

The subject No. 4 referring to the question of the admission of American negroes as missionaries in Africa, is one which is introduced at the request of several American societies. Our plan is to make use of the material which the committee under your chairmanship gathered together, and we have requested Mr. Turner to prepare a memorandum based upon your report which we may circulate in advance of the Council meeting.⁵⁶

This was the only item on the proposed agenda that Pinson, Methodist Episcopal Church missions secretary, commented on and clearly Warnshuis is responding to the questions raised by 'American societies' concerning African American missionaries to Africa. It was shown in Chapter 3 that the IMC had enough influence with the British colonial government to be trusted to exclude African American and even Afro-British missionaries.⁵⁷ It would appear that the British colonial government needed the co-operation of the IMC to enforce its ban on African American

⁵⁶ A.L. Warnshuis at the IMC to W.W. Pinson of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 13 March 1923, World Council of Churches archives IMC files on the meeting at Oxford July 1923.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 4, footnote 26 for a memo of the meeting between Oldham of the IMC and the British Colonial Office concerning the exclusion of African American missionaries from East Africa.

missionaries to Africa. Therefore these representatives of African American missions interests in Africa were appealing to the right group for help in gaining access to Africa.

Some of the delegates from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands wrote reports on the conference when they returned home. They each mentioned the presence of Africans and African Americans at the conference. Door Crommelin, former missionary with the Netherlands Missionary Society in Java, wrote:

At the conference a large number of negroes were present (both men and women) both from Africa and the U.S., who, because of their honest statements brought a mysterious way to the meeting, and who made us see the reality of the questions. Among them there were a lot of ministers and even some bishops from Anglican or Methodist churches, a secretary for young people, the already known Max Yergan (from meetings at Rauvik and Helsingfors), several teachers and even someone who made a special study of African music. The special thing that African music can give became clear to us because of songs the Negro choir sang that took care of the religious worship services on Sunday.

Even in the Southern African Union Negro Americans are forbidden to enter. Max Yergan (I think an Afro-American missionary), who was well known for the excellent work he does with the African youth, had great difficulties in entering the country.⁵⁸

This quotation is significant because of its mention of, 'a large number of negroes present' at the conference. Being from the Netherlands, Crommelin may have seen the four Africans and six African Americans who were official members of the conference as a larger number than he had seen before. Maybe he saw them as large in proportion to the relatively small number on the committee that addressed the question of African American missionaries. However, it is most likely that other

⁵⁸ Door D. Crommelin, 'De Internationale Africka-Conf. te Le Zoute 1926,' Translated by Simona Bellersheim, *Mededeelingen Tijdschrift Noor Zendingswetenschap*, 1926, 316,321.

African Americans attended the conference, such as those who made up the 'Negro choir' that Crommelin mentioned in his quote. These people would have attended the conference as unofficial members which was a common practice. Crommelin makes little distinction between the African delegates and the African American ones. He seems to have seen them both as advocates of African American missionaries to Africa.

W.R. Oettli, Secretary of the (Swiss) Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, wrote concerning his time at Le Zoute:

There was no lack of representatives of Negroes won through Christianity. They came either from America or from South Africa.

Among the Negro Americans there was the widespread demand to be allowed to help and work for the improvement of their fellow brothers in Africa. During the meeting of the International Missions Council at Lake Mohonk in the fall of 1921, we had already dealt with this desire, which was most understandably expressed in Le Zoute, as well. In view of the fact that the appearance of American Negroes in Africa has often led to political unrest and that governments because of this were cautious with reference to this question....Fundamentally the work of the American Negroes, of whom even a few have rendered precious service, has been welcomed. The persons have to be chosen carefully and they do best to be with societies which have an acknowledged reputation. Here opens an opportunity, which is mostly not seen, but has a great perspective for the missionary work in Africa in the coming centuries.⁵⁹

Oettli indicates in this quotation that he saw both the African American and the colonial government perspective. He mentions the fact that this issue was raised at the 1921 conference at Mohonk and now five years later the same question was being raised again apparently with little or no response in between. Oettli seems clear in

⁵⁹ W.R. Oettli, (Missionsinspector) 'Die Internationale Konferenz uber die christliche Mission in Afrika in Le Zoute (Belgien),' Translated by Simona Bellersheim, *Das Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*, 1926 (November) 331,339.

his understanding of the recommendations of the conference. African American missionaries were to be allowed to enter Africa provided they were properly trained and supervised by well established mission agencies. These qualifications could be interpreted broadly or narrowly depending on the desires of the author. Did any of the African American mission agencies qualify as well established mission agencies? Was this designed to insure that, like the Hemans, all African American missionaries were supervised by white missionaries? This was the great unanswered question of the Le Zoute conference as far as African American missionaries were concerned. The vague wording of the recommendations represented a crack that was big enough to exclude a large part of the African American missionary effort to Africa (except Liberia).

Julius Richter, Professor of Theology at Berlin University, wrote a more caustic evaluation of the presence of the African American missionaries at the conference. Since he was an official member of the committee evaluating these missionaries, and as an academic and not a missionary, like Crommelin or Oettli, his perspective was understandably different from theirs. He states:

Most of the blacks present kept silent,... when a black from a Southern-state spoke with an infuriated trembling voice like that of a demagogical agitator, it did not leave a positive impression on him [Belgium State Secretary, Franck].

The only striking question which was discussed seriously, was the one that asked for the participation of southern-state blacks in the missionary work in Africa. Legal regulations, which hinder or even prohibit this, are seldom found in Africa. But as the blacks, especially the American blacks, have caused so much unrest in Africa, provoking so many conspiracies and riots, have so many foolish and seductive slogans been distributed, most colonial governments are extremely reluctant in permitting black missionaries. In the end, the conference agreed to give way to the American black missionaries in Africa, both in connection with white societies and envoys of black churches. But it demanded seriously of all agencies, that send out black

missionaries, extreme care in their selection, so that only fully qualified men and women would be sent.⁶⁰

Richter was observing not only what the African American missionary said, but how others in the room seemed to react to it. Louis Franck, a high-ranking Belgian diplomat, was certainly in a position to effect the visa applications of African American missionaries to Congo. Richter's view appeared to be sympathetic with the colonial position but his final statements are basically consistent with the decision of the conference. Requiring African American missionaries to get proper training before entering colonial Africa seemed like a reasonable request. However, the request that African American missionaries should have proper supervision was fraught with potential difficulties.

Edwin Smith, the official historian of the Le Zoute conference, wrote of the impact of the African and African American contingent this way:

I shall cherish longest the memory of what took place on Saturday morning. There had been a discussion on the relation of the races in Africa. A studied restraint marked the speeches, but feelings had run deep. None had attempted to deny the seriousness of the situations. Mr. Yergan had spoken in moving terms of the African's willingness to co-operate-of his bigness of heart and generosity of soul, of his patience and capacity of endurance, all of which should make an appeal to the white man's sense of fair-play. When the time came for devotions a stout Zulu-John Dube-stepped forward and announced the hymn. 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.' In response to his invitation several members offered prayer. There was silence, and presently it was broken by the voice of John Dube praying in Zulu. Few persons understood the language; those who did speak of the beauty of that prayer. Everybody entered into the spirit of it.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Julius Richter, 'Die Afrika-Missionskonferenz in Le Zoute from 14 to 20 September 1926,' Translated by Simona Bellersheim, *Neue Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift*, vol. 1, 1927, 8.

⁶¹ Smith, *The Christian Mission*, 34.

From these comments there is a sense of the emotions present at this meeting. The European, African and American participants seem to have been caught up in the spirit of the moment and for a little while it did not matter what color they were or what culture they were from. The sincerity and power of Dube's prayer in Zulu broke through the artificial barriers that had long held people apart and brought the delegates together as brothers and sisters in Christ. The sense of fair play and rightness held by the delegates was appealed to and the feeling that Smith expressed in this quotation seems to have been shared by many participants at the conference. They concluded that African Americans ought to have an opportunity to send missionaries to Africa as European mission agencies did. This was the recommendation of the committee and the conference itself as stated in the final report:

American Negroes and Africa

I. Findings as to Facts (of the Le Zoute Conference)

1. There are no legislative restrictions specifically directed against the American Negro, but most African Governments are opposed to, or place difficulties in the way of, the sending of American Negroes to Africa.
2. Opposition to the sending of American Negroes to Africa is due mainly to three factors:
 - (a) The unrest caused by certain movements believed to be dangerous to order and government and to be encouraged from America.
 - (b) The antagonism to Government in past years of certain American Negroes in Africa resulting in serious disturbances in some cases.
 - (c) The failure of certain American Negroes in Africa in past years.
3. Owing to the effect of one or more of the reasons above-named, most American missionaries consulted do not think the present time auspicious for pressing upon Government such a general change in policy as would mean the sending of a large number of American Negroes to Africa in the immediate future, although strongly believing that efforts should be made to increase gradually the number of such missionaries.

4. There are at present working in various parts of Africa American Negroes of the highest character and great usefulness, whose fine spirit and devoted work will in the course of a few years greatly increase the respect in which American Negro missionaries are held, and make easier the securing of permission for the entrance of additional missionaries.
5. There is a natural laudable desire on the part of a large number of American missionary societies, both white and Negro, to send additional American Negroes as missionaries to Africa—thereby giving the educated Negro an outlet for his zeal to render unselfish service, and aiding in a natural and important way the cause of African evangelization, education and general welfare.

II. Recommendations

In view of the above findings the Conference adopts the following resolutions:

1. That the Negroes of America should be permitted by Governments and encouraged by missionary societies, to play an important part in the evangelization, medical service and education of Africa, and that the number of their missionaries should be increased as qualified candidates are available for needed work, and as their representatives already in the field still further succeed in gaining for their people and their societies that public confidence which is essential.
2. That every practicable form of assistance should be given in the spirit of Christian fellowship, as to colleagues of the same missionary status, by white missionaries to qualified American Negroes working in Africa, and that the same spirit of co-operation should be expected by white missionaries from American Negro missionaries.
3. That Governments should be supported in requiring that American Negroes wishing to enter Africa for missionary purposes should go out under the auspices of responsible societies of recognized and well-established standing; and that owing to the difficult and delicate inter-racial situation in Africa, exceptional care should be used in the selection of men and women of strength of character and a fine spirit of co-operation able to meet the same tests as white missionaries.
4. That in the interest of comity and co-operation American Negro missionary societies not now represented in Africa should work as far as possible through well-established societies already in Africa, and that, in accordance with the general rules of missionary procedure, they should give special attention to unevangelized districts.

5. That when missionary societies of established reputation are unable to secure the admission to Africa of American Negroes needed for important work and qualified to perform it, the matter may properly be taken up with the International Missionary Council for the use of its friendly offices.
6. In adopting these resolutions the Conference recognizes that the above recommendations are not an ideal or a complete solution of the problem under consideration, but believes that they represent the 'next step' which may be wisely taken, and that they should, in the providence of God, gradually bring about a highly significant and important contribution by Negroes of America to their distant kindred in Africa.⁶²

This statement was designed to please a very diverse group of colonial official, mission agencies and African American missionaries. The colonial representatives at the conference must have been pleased that supervision of African American missionaries was assured and that the numbers were limited. The white mission boards must have been pleased to still be in control of their areas and to have the assurance from the African American missionaries that they would respect these boundaries. The African Americans were pleased with the acknowledgement of previous bars and the promise that they would be removed, that their missionaries would be treated as equals by the white mission boards, that they could focus on the unevangelized areas of Africa and that if they had any difficulties gaining access to Africa, they could appeal to the IMC for help.

However, there were some words in this statement that had rather slippery meanings. Words like 'gradually' used in 'Finding of facts 3.' It was used in relation to the rate at which African American missionaries should be allow on the field. It could easily be interpreted in the same way many missionaries did to

⁶² Ibid., 124.

describe the rate at which Africans were to be allowed to lead their own churches. Another phrase that needed defining was 'qualified candidates.' Were they thinking of the 'Tuskegee type' who knew how to co-operate and keep in their place? It was vague and could be interpreted loosely or tightly according to the desires of the interpreter.

Another key phrase in this document is that these missionaries should go under the auspices of 'well-established societies.' Obviously this meant the ones currently operating in colonial Africa. The idea implied here was that neither Africans nor African Americans could be given authority to lead their own mission work. This was the great test of Tuskegee Institute, according to Booker T. Washington, who wrote, "I knew that, in a large degree, we were trying an experiment—that of testing whether or not it was possible for Negroes to build up and control the affairs of a large educational institution. I knew that if we failed it would injure the whole race. I knew that the presumption was against us."⁶³ This issue of supervision in 'Recommendation 3' was the real issue that the Hemans faced twenty years earlier and yet this statement seems to be saying that this was the preferred way African American missionaries should enter Africa.

The word 'co-operation' had become the watchword of the IMC in the 1920s. However, it seemed to take on a different meaning when applied to African American missionaries. When it was used in the wider conference it implied equality between the co-operators, but when applied to African American missionaries it

⁶³ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 145.

meant knowing how to stay in ones place and endure the inequities and slights just as the Hemans had for so many years.⁶⁴

The renaissance of identity and selfhood among African American missionaries of the 1920s was making this more and more difficult for even Yergan to maintain. It certainly affected the Hemans as well. African American missionaries understood co-operation to mean working together on an equal basis.

Harlan Beach, historian, records the findings concerning African American involvement in missions to Africa of the 'Negro Student Leadership Conference' held in Atlanta in 1914:

Of nineteen boards of white churches labouring there to-day, five employ twenty-three Negroes who are in a true sense missionaries from the United States. Four missionary boards, managed solely by coloured churches here, have sent out and now employed in Africa somewhat less than 150 coloured men and women. In cases in which they were strong and well prepared missionaries, they proved effective, though African prejudices and the estimate in which white men powerful in the continent held them militated against their highest usefulness. The great obstacle to their success is found in the inferior preparation of many of them.

It calls, however, for the choicest sons and daughters of the negro race. The task is pre-eminently a task of leadership, which demands careful training with constant emphasis upon the qualities which have been already described.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ As Zambian politician, Kenneth Kaunda, said of the Central African Federation in the 1950s, that the partnership that Welensky had in mind was the relationship between a horse and its rider.

⁶⁵ Harland Beach, 'The Negro Christian Student Conference,' *International Review of Missions*, vol.4, 1915, 280,281. An entry in the minutes of the Livingstonia Mission (Malawi) dated 10 January 1881, Ms 7912 located in the National Library of Scotland, indicates the ambivalence that was sometimes felt by white mission boards toward African American missionaries, 'Dr. Smith read a letter from Mr. Russell a coloured medical missionary in the United States desiring to serve the Misson. The Committee were[sic] not inclined to look favourably on the application having an ample supply of native assistants from Lovedale.' Lovedale Institute was a Free Presbyterian school for Africans in South Africa and will be discussed in conjunction with Max Yergan's time in South Africa at the end of this chapter.

Harold Isaacs describes the relationship between African American missionaries and white mission boards in this way:

With but rare exceptions, the large white Christian denominations seldom wished to send Negro workers into the African vineyards. Even when they did wish it, they seldom did so, and when they did, they did it sparingly and not for long. This too came out of the complex of fears and ambivalences suffered by so many white Christians where Negroes were concerned. It was also due in part to the fact that the white rulers in most of Africa did not want Negroes coming in from America as missionaries. It was feared they would upset Africans' ideas of how a black man was supposed to look, act, and sound.⁶⁶

African American missionaries could not just meet the same standards as white missionaries, they had to exceed them to get in the door. It took a clearly exceptional individual like Aggrey to convince the Kenya colonial government to break their color bar on entry of African American missionaries. It took exceptional missionaries like Max Yergan, Althea Edmiston or William Sheppard to break through barriers so that others could follow. When the figures in Beach's quote, collected in 1914, on the number of African American missionaries are compared with the figures that W.E.B. DuBois published in his article in 1929, it is evident that following the Le Zoute conference these mission boards continued reducing the number of African American missionaries they employed.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Harold Isaacs, *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York: The John Day Company, 1963), 124.

⁶⁷ See W.E.B. Du Bois quote in chapter 6, footnote 1. It implies that the number of African American missionaries employed by white American mission boards in 1929 had dropped from the beginning of the decade.

African American perceptions of the conference

The initial quotation in this chapter by J.E. East indicates the great hope that he put in this conference. His quote is stated here, “Never in the history of missions has there been such an important Christian Conference held in interest of Christianizing Africa as that held in Le Zoute, Belgium, Sept. 14-21.”⁶⁸ Although this turned out to be an exaggeration of the actual impact of the Le Zoute conference, it indicated East’s estimation of the conference.

As a missions secretary East was under some pressure to justify the financial expenditure for sending people to the conference. In this quote he gives his assessment of the feeling of the African American delegates at the Le Zoute conference:

The contention of the colored delegates was that there was a growing urge and an increasing mission consciousness on the part of American colored Christians for mission work in Africa; a growing feeling that the Negro church should take a larger part in carrying the gospel back to his unfortunate-brothers in the land of his ancestors. Dr. Hope in his address made a most touching plea for the door of Africa to be opened up to the Negro of America, while in committee, where this subject was more thoroughly discussed, Negro delegates with much earnestness urged for an opportunity for the American Negro to make a missionary contribution to Africa; that closed doors be opened and equal chance be given him to carry every blessing enjoyed in America to his unfortunate brother in Africa.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ J.E. East, editor, *MH*, vol. 29, no. 9, October 1926, 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

East states concerning the conference's resolution about African American missionaries:

The opposition gradually weakened and a favorable resolution passed recommending the opening of Africa to the Negro churches of America. It was strongly urged, however, that competent missionaries should be sent out to carry on the work of the Master and that such missionaries should avoid all friction with governments and work harmoniously with other missionaries on the field.⁷⁰

The wording of the resolution at Le Zoute gave East every reason to be pleased. It was exactly what he had hoped for and according to his quotation, it had not been easy to get the committee's agreement. Considering the diversity of the committee members it is surprising that they could agree on anything, much less something as significant as allowing African American missionaries into Africa.

East goes on to confess that African Americans could learn much about missions to Africa from their white brothers. He states, "The attitude of the white missionaries in opposing the coming of colored people to Africa has quite evidently misled many of our group respecting the genuineness and sincerity of white missionaries in the welfare of Africa. White missionaries are out there three thousand strong."⁷¹ This acknowledgement of the contribution to African missions

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6. Missionary Elizabeth Bouey gives a report of the conference that is printed in the *Mission Herald*, vol. 29, no. 11, December 1926, 34. She never mentions the conference findings concerning African American missionaries but it may be that she expected East to do this. Concerning the racial attitudes of African Americans in Liberia where Bouey was a missionary, Amanda Berry Smith, African American missionary, states in her autobiography, 'But I find that human nature is the same in black men, even in Africa, as in white men in America. It is the same old story everywhere: 'None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good,' in *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith the Colored Evangelist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 438.

by white missionaries shows that there was no animosity towards them from East for their past record of denying African American missionaries entry to colonial Africa.

Charles Graham, secretary of the LCC, gave an equally positive report of the conference to his board and this resulted in a decision by the board to attempt to expand its work. Historian of the LCC, Leroy Fitts, states, “The new spirit of the conference at Le Zoute inspired the LCC to change its restrictive policy of limited work in Liberia, Haiti, and Russia to a policy of expansion in India and South Africa.”⁷²

Yergan wrote about his views on the conference in the Hampton Institute journal *Southern Workman*:

Here were gathered missionaries and the directors of societies working in all parts of the Continent, highly placed government officials, Negroes of both Africa and America, and a number of educational and other experts, as well as philanthropists. The questions discussed at the conference covered the full wide range of African life and conditions, and the effort put forth was one aimed at discovering how the forces now at work in Africa might be better understood, improved upon where necessary, and more effectively and cooperatively directed in the interest of native Africans, as well as the requirements of government and commerce. In other words, Africa has come out from the past that we knew.⁷³

Although Yergan does not mention African American missionaries, he does seem to have come away from the conference with a positive impression. This positive attitude toward the conference seemed to be characteristic of most of the African

⁷² Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy*, 83. Fitts states that, ‘In Graham’s opinion, the Negro delegates to the conference had won a significant victory for the development of an African mission program.’

⁷³ Max Yergan, ‘Race Currents and Conditions in South Africa,’ *Southern Workman*, vol. 56, no. 3, March 1927, 109-110.

Americans who attended. Yergan expressed the hope, which many who attended the conference shared with him, for a new day in Africa.

Changes resulting from the conference

In evaluating the results of the Le Zoute conference it would be easy to say that nothing of significance to African American missions happened. The mission boards remained deadly silent on employing them, only speaking of the issue when asked directly.⁷⁴ An example of this was the query by W.E.B. DuBois made to them in 1929.⁷⁵ The article he published in *Crisis* that same year, three years after the Le Zoute conference, told a dismal story of the relationship between African Americans and white mission boards.

As Oldham, Secretary of the IMC, wrote in an article entitled, “Co-Operation-Its Necessity and Cost”, “Experience has shown that when the missionary societies present a reasonable policy and put it forward in the proper way, governments are willing to give it sympathetic consideration.”⁷⁶ Oldham obviously understood what

⁷⁴ Historian Kenneth Brown makes this point, ‘Perhaps the most specific and penetrating criticism that has been made of the color prejudice as it lingers in the mission churches points to the psychological and spiritual silences of the missionary. So often he has been without speech on occasions when the African has felt he should speak forth on Christian social issues, wherein is contained the hope of the African future.’ ‘Color and Christian Missions in Africa,’ *The Journal of Religious Thought* vol. 23 1966-67, 55.

⁷⁵ See chapter 6 footnote 1.

⁷⁶ J.H. Oldham, ‘Co-Operation-Its Necessity and Cost,’ in *International Review of Missions*, vol. 7, 1919, 181. Oldham goes on to state, ‘To have a policy, however, is not enough. In relations with governments, as in all human affairs, there is a personal side. The foundation of good relations is mutual confidence. To succeed in negotiations with governments it is essential that missions should be

these conditions were although they were not expressed in official policy. However, unofficially Oldham must have discussed with the colonial office his views and heard their views. Then he must have shared what he heard with other mission executives such as Turner, his USA counterpart and Warnshuis, his assistant, before a decision of the 'inner circle' of the IMC was made and then presented to the members. As a voluntary organisation, it was important for the constituents of the IMC to feel that they were getting the representation that they wanted. This did not mean being forced into something that they did not want to do. So in the short run the IMC could come up with whatever statement it wanted. It just had to be vague enough to be interpreted according to the desires of each mission board in the long run. The IMC really had no power that the mission boards did not give it. The lack of followup of the resolutions made at Le Zoute proved this.

According to DuBois' report the mission boards did very little as a result of this conference. Ecumenical conferences like the one held at Le Zoute were valuable for surveying missionary opinion and evaluating methodology, but it was the mission boards who had the final word on mission policy.⁷⁷ The African American mission boards apparently did not understand the inner workings of the IMC and what it was interested and capable of doing for its constituents. It existed to do the bidding of its member boards and did not have a will of its own apart from them. Therefore if

represented by a body of men who have learned from growing experience the conditions with which they have to deal.' p. 181

⁷⁷ Sometimes not even the mission boards had the authority to set policy as individual churches could determine their giving to the mission based on the degree they felt its mission policies reflected the church's position.

these mission boards said they did not want African American missionaries then the IMC could insure that none were sent.⁷⁸ Therefore a minority group like African American missionaries was not going to receive a fair hearing unless these mission boards agreed to it. It could be fairly stated that it was about 30-40 more years before these boards finally took action on the decisions made at Le Zoute. In the meantime African American mission boards continued to send out those missionaries that they could.

As a result of the conference at Le Zoute and other forces working at that time, the main missionary effort of African American boards shifted more toward building indigenous leadership in Africa rather than sending African Americans as missionaries. The conference proposal to limit African American missionaries to ‘established’ mission agencies in Africa made it difficult for new mission boards to enter Africa. Apparently, the partitioning of Africa had taken place in the 1880s both politically and religiously. The decision of African American mission agencies to support African leadership was the very thing that the European mission agencies and colonial governments greatly feared, unsupervised African missionaries.

Max Yergan in South Africa

For all intents and purposes the Le Zoute conference may have signaled the closure of direct African American missions to colonial Africa, but at least one

⁷⁸ See Chapter 4 footnote 26 for an explanation of how the mission agencies and British colonial government co-operated in excluding African American missionaries from colonial Africa.

African American who managed to slip through the colonial color bars was Max Yergan.

Yergan, who had returned to the USA from East Africa in 1918 due to ill health, was allowed to enter South Africa after initially having his visa rejected by that government. Upon winning an appeal with the government he was subsequently admitted in 1921 and moved his family to the town of Alice in Cape Colony.⁷⁹ Alice was a small town named after Princess Alice, the second daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. It was primarily known as the location of two major educational institutions for black South Africans. The first was Lovedale Institute and the other was Fort Hare University, formerly known as The South African Native College.

Lovedale Institute was founded in 1841 by Rev. W. Govan of the Glasgow Missionary Society for the training of teachers and clergy. Its name was a tribute to Rev. Dr. Love of Glasgow who was one of the early secretaries of the London Missionary Society. The school started with twenty students, eleven black and nine white, but eventually became a secondary school for black South Africans and in 1894, was almost entirely supported by the Free Church of Scotland. Scottish missionary Dr. James Stewart became the second principal of the school in 1870.

⁷⁹ For a description of Yergan's visa troubles in South Africa and the role that Thomas Jesse Jones of the Phelps Stokes Fund in New York played in this see Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education* (Oxford University Press, 1971). This letter from YMCA executive Patton to Edward Jenkins, 7 May 1921, Yergan files, YMCA archive, University of Minnesota, St Paul, is descriptive of the difficulties that Yergan had, "...both Dr. Jones and Dr. Loram seem really hesitant as to the wisdom of a negro worker joining us here. Though both agreed, I think, that ultimately it was really a question of the disposition and character of the man himself, particularly as to his level headedness and humility. Dr. Jones' final word was - 'can't you let the matter lie over until my return to America, when I can go into the question with those interested there?' I now think it advisable to conform to this suggestion, if possible. While Dr. Jones did not say so, I assume that he would not wish his opinion to come to the ears of our negro brethren."

Stewart's dream was to eventually establish a University College to further the education of blacks, but he never lived to see it occur.⁸⁰ By the time Stewart died in December 1905 a significant black middle-class had developed in the Eastern Cape who were highly literate and supportive of Lovedale and the idea of starting a University.⁸¹ Yergan, his wife Susie and their four children lived in Alice the entire time they were in South Africa. It was probably no accident that the YMCA sent the Yergans to live there. It had a history of allowing some blacks to vote, own land and get education.⁸² It was no doubt a haven for the Yergan family and a place where he could dialogue with black South Africans who were educationally his equal.

In February 1916, The South African Native College was formally opened.⁸³ It was located only a mile from Lovedale Institute on the other side of the Tyhume River near a former frontier outpost of the Eastern Cape called Fort Hare. The first class consisted of twenty students and included two sons of Lovedale missionaries.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ James Stewart, *Lovedale - South Africa*, (Edinburgh: T & T Constable, 1894), 3-7. In her PhD dissertation, "James Stewart and Lovedale," Edinburgh 1974, Sheila Brock states about Lovedale, "From the outset the Institution was inter-denominational, inter-tribal and inter-racial, though blacks and whites ate at separate tables in the same dining room and slept in separate dormitories." p. 15

⁸¹ The Cape government agreed to support Fort Hare College if blacks could raise at least £25,000. See T. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, (Pretoria: UNISA, forthcoming).

⁸² When Yergan's children (Frederick, Max Jr., Charles, and Mary) returned to the USA they were in advance of the education system and eventually transferred to New England universities that provided a greater academic challenge. This was probably a result of the level of education they received at Lovedale Institute in South Africa.

⁸³ The school was originally called the Inter-State Native College when the first conference to plan its foundation was held in 1905, but with the union of South Africa in 1910 the name was changed to reflect this. For a detailed explanation of this conference and African missionaries see Thompson, *Touching the Heart*, (UNISA, forthcoming) chapter 8, 'Redeeming Failure.'

⁸⁴ Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom For My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews*, (London: Rex Collings, 1981), 49, 50.

South African President Nelson Mandela later attended Fort Hare University and had this to say about the school:

Until 1960, the University College of Fort Hare in the municipality of Alice, about twenty miles due east from Healdtown, was the only residential centre of higher education for blacks in South Africa. Fort Hare was more than that: it was a beacon for African scholars from all over Southern, Central and Eastern Africa. For young black South Africans like myself, it was Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Yale, all rolled into one.”⁸⁵

Yergan was given the task of establishing black YMCA branches throughout South Africa primarily among students. Although, Fort Hare University was his first target area, he was required to do quite a bit of traveling to other parts of South Africa. With the strict pass laws that limited the movement of blacks in South Africa at that time, it must have been difficult for him to do his job. However, by 1936 he had established over 33 YMCA branches and raised the funds for and built a YMCA center at Fort Hare University, primarily from a \$25,000 gift from American philanthropist John D. Rockefeller.⁸⁶ This was no small task considering there was a world-wide depression during the last 7 years of his time in South Africa.

The title of the article by historian David Anthony, “Max Yergan in South Africa: From Evangelical Pan-Africanist to Revolutionary Socialist” implies that a shift in Yergan’s political ideology took place while he was in South Africa.

Anthony writes of Yergan:

From 1921 to 1936 he was the only black representative of the North American branch of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)

⁸⁵ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 41.

⁸⁶ See chapter 4 footnotes 99-101 on the gifts from Rockefeller and the Phelps Stokes Fund (\$1,000) for Yergan’s project in 1928.

permitted to work in the South African field. Yergan's South African service radicalized the young missionary, culminating in his resignation from the YMCA in 1936. The next decade of Yergan's life was devoted to left-wing activism.⁸⁷

What motivated Yergan to make this shift? A look at some of his earlier comments might help clarify his views while a missionary in East Africa. Yergan writes in 1916:

The Christian element here as you know is too small almost to consider. Yet how easily one can tell simply by the expressions on their faces, those who are Christians. My whole heart seemed to go out to the millions here and elsewhere who do not know this joy. And in a larger way I feel what we are missing in our own growth at home by having such a small share in this world development and world spread of all that is best in Christianity.⁸⁸

It appears from this letter that Yergan held to the 'reflex influence' of Christianity on the churches in the USA who benefited from having a share in the spread of Christianity around the world. He writes in another letter to Moorland that same year:

When I realize that all the matters about which I have written to you in this letter, relate to the Kingdom of God, I tremble lest I appear bitter and selfish in expressing my opinions. Truly I have no other desire than to see God's Kingdom actually in existence. I have recently undertaken with renewed vigor the big battle of absolutely forgetting myself....I see my life in the past full of sin and mistakes. Then during the last four or five years I see the

⁸⁷ David H. Anthony III, 'Max Yergan in South Africa: From Evangelical Pan-Africanist to Revolutionary Socialist,' in *African Studies Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, September 1991, 27. The Yergan files (39 boxes of his personal records) at Howard University, Washington D.C. have been closed to the public since his death in 1975. No doubt, these records will reveal more about the reasons for Yergan's shift in ideology. The files may be made available to the public in 2025 according to the archivist at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University (hereafter cited as MSRC).

⁸⁸ Yergan to Moorland, 30 August 1916, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. In an undated letter, written from South Africa where he worked from 1921-1936, Yergan reveals his views on the gospel, 'I say again that a wise and loving God must mean that we Negroes in America, who have made such unprecedented progress in intellectual and material gain, should with a bountiful arm of help reach across the ten thousand miles of space which separate us from the land of our fathers and plant here, as a testimony of thanks, love, and devotion, a service which will inspire, and lead out into the nobler blessings of life, the youth and manhood of this country.'

growing grip of Christ upon me....Thus I ask nothing for myself but prayer. It's the great need for Christ out here that puts me in this frame of mind perhaps. God knows He is needed and badly.⁸⁹

In contrast with this comment are the following excerpts from Yergan's letter of resignation from the YMCA written in 1936:

The first and most important reason for my resignation from the work in South Africa is my firm conviction that the government of South Africa is not only not interested in the development of Africans but is quite definitely committed to a policy which is destructive of any real growth among Africans of that country.

For me, it follows that any truly constructive work of the International Committee or any similar body in South Africa, is inseparable from government policy. If the Committee is interested in the development of a character in human beings which will result in the larger spiritual, social and economic good of the people among whom it is at work, there is either inevitable conflict between such work and government policy or the work becomes subservient to government policy.

It therefore seems to me that any organization, movement or institution at work among the natives of South Africa, is necessarily political. Under the circumstances there can hardly be any such thing as political neutrality.

It therefore seems to me that I am not justified in running the risk of possibly embarrassing the International Committee by that course of action in South Africa which I firmly believe to be right and in the interest of the good life for Africans as well as the mass of non-ruling Europeans in that country.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Yergan to Moorland, 7 October 1916, Moorland YMCA War Work files, MSRC. Yergan often signed his letters to Moorland during this period 'Your fellow servant in Christ.'

⁹⁰ Yergan's resignation letter to Frank Slack of the YMCA, 6 March 1936, located in the Phelps-Stokes Fund files on Max Yergan, Manuscripts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City Public Library (hereafter cited as Schomburg). Also used in the article by David Anthony 'Max Yergan in South Africa,' *African Studies Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, September 1991, 27-55. The Phelps-Stokes Fund was a philanthropic agency committed specifically to the education of people of African descent beginning in the early 1910s. In spite of its paternalistic bias toward people of African descent its files hold a wealth of original letters and documents from early Africans, like E.B. Kalibala, whose education it funded in USA schools. Anson Phelps Stokes to Frank Slack of the YMCA, 15 April 1936, Phelps-Stokes Fund files, Schomburg. Stokes states concerning Yergan's replacement, '...it would be worthy of serious consideration to have an African Native selected in his place.' In the conclusion of this letter Stokes states, 'I should be glad personally to recommend to our Trustees that we make an appropriation of \$250 a year for three years for the continuance of work started by Mr. Yergan in case a well-equipped man is found to carry on this work.'

In this letter Yergan appears to have already made an ideological shift. There is no way of knowing its cause for sure, but the following are some events that might have influenced him.

First was the death of Jesse Moorland who, through his letters, was like a father and pastor to Yergan. Their letters back and forth over the years spoke of the warmth of their relationship. The following quotation from a letter Moorland wrote to Yergan is an example of the relationship that Moorland and Yergan had:

My dear Yergan: Your precious letters of November 26th and December 19th, at hand. I have read them over and over with the greatest of pleasure and joy....Your letters sound like the Modern Acts Of The Apostles and I treasure them dearly.....We talk about you very often and may you ever remember that you are precious in the sight of the Lord and that He will look after you and protect you. It will be a joy to meet you when you come back and sit down and talk with you over all of your varied experiences.⁹¹

Moorland retired from the YMCA in 1923, but continued his involvement until his death in 1939.⁹² Without Moorland's pastoral influence, Yergan may have felt he had lost an important anchor in his life.

Another possible cause of Yergan's shift was that his repeated requests for help in terms of more workers in South Africa went unheeded by the YMCA. In a request written shortly after arriving in South Africa in 1922, Yergan wrote emphatically to Moorland about his need for help, "To get this fairly well going, I

⁹¹ Moorland to Yergan, 23 February 1917, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. There are many other examples of this kind of letter that indicated almost a 'father-son' relationship between Moorland and Yergan. Moorland was a Presbyterian cleric and often gave pastoral encouragement to Yergan and the other YMCA secretaries. As a board member of Howard University he was instrumental in nominating Yergan for receipt of an honorary masters of arts from that school.

⁹² See the Moorland's papers, MSRC.

give myself a year and then I warn you now, I MUST HAVE ONE POSSIBLY TWO MEN associated with me.”⁹³ He sent another request from South Africa, “As your representative out here, I warn you now to prepare for the inevitable growth in our work in Africa. The present activities must be sustained, a larger work, calling for more men and money must be projected.”⁹⁴ For whatever reasons, no further YMCA secretaries were sent to assist Yergan during the 15 years he served in South Africa and this must have frustrated him.

Another potential cause of the transformation of Yergan’s views may have been a result of the racism he experienced in South Africa. There could be little doubt that as Yergan traveled widely throughout South Africa, he experienced racism. C.T. Loram, member of the Native Affairs Commission of South Africa in the early 1920s, wrote to Yergan shortly after his arrival in South Africa, “Some day I should like to add my testimony to the good work you are doing and especially to the tactful way in which you have adapted yourself to our little prejudices.”⁹⁵ No doubt Yergan would not have agreed with Loram’s evaluation of apartheid as “our little prejudices.” Undoubtedly he suffered from it just as many South Africans did.

This letter from Oswin Bull, YMCA secretary for South Africa, for whom Yergan was to work, indicates the key role that race played concerning his visa:

⁹³ Yergan to Moorland, 15 May 1922, 3, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. The emphasis in this quotation is in the original.

⁹⁴ Yergan to YMCA, no date, Moorland YMCA War files, MSRC. There are a number of letters in this file in which Yergan explains the difficulties of traveling in South Africa and how much he would be helped by more YMCA secretaries from the USA.

⁹⁵ C.T. Loram to Yergan, 23 August 1922, Moorland YMCA files, MSRC.

The South African Government has long been doubtful as to the wisdom of admitting American Negroes to work in any capacity in this country. This existing prejudice or hesitancy caused the turning down of our first application for your admission. When Dr. Jesse Jones arrived in the Union, I asked him about you and in response to my enquires, he wrote at once to America for information. It was the reply which we received as the direct result of his enquiries and assistance which carried the day. With Dr. Loram's help, our application was renewed much sooner than I had hoped to be able to do it. This reply was so strongly in your favor as to overcome all hesitation and objection.⁹⁶

Yergan states of the final approval of his visa in a letter to Tuskegee president Robert Moton:

I am happy to inform you that the long period of delay and disappointment with reference to the beginning of Association work in Africa has at last come to a close. A few days ago the Foreign Department received a cablegram stating that the South African Government had reversed its decision by which I had been refused admittance to the country.... I am sure you will rejoice with us over the happy termination of this matter.⁹⁷

In spite of the approval of Yergan's visa, it is highly unlikely that he escaped feelings of disappointed about the role that race played in the decision-making process of the South African government and the YMCA. It could reasonably be speculated that after living in South Africa for 15 years and working with the YMCA for over 20 years, Yergan could not reconcile the behavior of Christians in this organization with what he knew to be true about God. Racism during this period, as acted out in its many forms, never had a pleasant result.

Yergan probably saw the need for social reform as being beyond the scope of his work with the YMCA. Indeed, because this organization was so influenced by

⁹⁶ Oswin Bull to Yergan, 26 June 1924, Phelps-Stokes Fund files, Schomburg.

⁹⁷ Yergan to Moton at Tuskegee Institute, 2 September 1921, Yergan files, YMCA archive, St Paul

the South African government social change may have seemed impossible to him. Therefore, he may have hoped that direct political involvement could bring about the social reform that he desired. To begin to actualize his desire for reform he shifted his political ideology to socialism.

The South African Communist Party began at Cape Town in 1921 and was headquartered in Johannesburg from 1921-1927. Its aim were described in this way:

In 1927 an 'immediate aims' programme was started which advocated; 'abolition of pass laws and of indentured labour; complete freedom of all workers to organise, irrespective of race, colour or creed; equal pay for equal work, irrespective of race, colour or creed; free education for all workers' children, European and non-European; abolition of poll-tax and hut-tax; confiscation of the land of big landowners and redistribution of land among the landless Native and European peasants; extension of the Cape (Coloured and Native) franchise to other provinces; equal justice for all, irrespective of colour.'⁹⁸

These aims would appear to be consistent with Yergan's, but the question was "How would they be accomplished?" The fact that these issues were positively addressed at all was more than most political parties in South Africa were willing to do at that time and this may have caused Yergan to want to find out more.

He decided to visit the Soviet Union to learn more about communism himself. He writes of this visit: "In the winter of 1936, while living in South Africa,

⁹⁸ *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol. 3, editor D. J. Potgieter, (Capetown: Nasionale Opvoedkundie Uitgenery (NASOU) Ltd, 1971), 369. "The total enrolled membership never exceeded 2750." It is not clear how close Yergan was to the South African Communist Party which was banned in South Africa during most of his time there. A closer study of South African records may well reveal that Yergan had some contacts with this group. See Clements Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa*, (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1970). Though probably not a Communist himself, Kadalie mentions sharing a podium with 'Rev. Yergan, B.A., representing the YMCA of America' and Tom Mann, 'an avowed Communist,' who was invited to speak as a 'veteran trade unionist of Great Britain.' p. 55 Finally, according to the forthcoming biography of Yergan by historian David Anthony, South African Govan Mbeki, one of the leading members of the ANC who spent many years in prison on Robbin Island with Nelson Mandela, credits Max Yergan with his conversion to communism.

I visited the Soviet Union as a tourist. In a conversation with a Russian official Mr. Lozovsky, I was naively amazed at his detailed grasp of facts about social and educational conditions in Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa.”⁹⁹ Yergan’s visit to the Soviet Union came just a few months before he wrote his resignation letter from the YMCA, dated 6 March 1936. Most likely, Yergan was interested in how communism could help him fulfill his lifelong goal which he states in an article for *Readers Digest* in 1961: “As an American and a Negro, my sympathies have always been with the African’s aspirations for freedom.”¹⁰⁰ Racial equality for all people of African descent was Yergan’s goal and political action became his method.

Living in South Africa most certainly played a part in Yergan’s turn to socialism. But it is not clear what his involvement was with the South African Communist Party. He must have hoped that the political agenda of the Communist Party included equality for African Americans and all people of color.

When Yergan returned to live in the USA, he became a university lecturer. According to the *New York Times*, “He returned here in 1936 and was appointed to the chair in Negro history at City College, thus, it was said, becoming the first

⁹⁹ Max Yergan, ‘The Communist Threat in Africa,’ *Africa Today*, ed. C. Grove Haines (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 263. After a brief search of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, Russian archives by Professor of Russian Studies, Apollon Davidson, no information on Yergan was found. This however only implies that Yergan’s involvement in communism may not have been overt while he was in South Africa. His letter of resignation from the YMCA was dated 6 March 1936 and was probably written after his return from the Soviet Union. For an explanation of the Communist view of African history during this period see Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova, ‘African History: A view from behind the Kremlin Wall,’ in *Rethinking African History*, edited by Simon McGrath and others, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre of African Studies, 1997), 45-70.

¹⁰⁰ Max Yergan, ‘The Strange American Policy,’ *Readers Digest*, November 1961, 7.

teacher of black studies on a major campus in the United States.”¹⁰¹ Through lecturing Yergan was able to share the perceptions he gained of Africa during his twenty years of experience there.

In 1938, in an effort to further his political aims of racial equality, Yergan helped found, with singer Paul Robeson, the Council on African Affairs. This organization brought together some of the foremost African Americans of that time and was a forerunner of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. However, in 1947 he split with Robeson and other leaders of the organization, claiming that “Communists sought to sabotage decisions of the board.”¹⁰²

Yergan’s involvement with the American Communist Party was shortlived possibly for the same reason that African American historian Bayard Rustin states in his book *Strategies for Freedom*:

Finally, the Communist party failed to attract broad support in the black community for the same reason it failed to win permanent footholds in the labor movement, in the academic world, in politics, or in any of the other institutions it tried to dominate. Simply put, the Communists’ primary concern was not with the black masses or with working people, but with the global objectives of the Soviet Union....They were prepared to sacrifice everything, including the urgent need for improved conditions for Negroes, for the USSR.¹⁰³

This willingness of the Communist Party to sacrifice the needs of African Americans for the needs of the USSR, was fundamentally against what Yergan believed.

Therefore, he broke his connection with the Communist Party a decade after joining.

¹⁰¹ Yergan obituary in *New York Times*, 13 April 1975

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Bayard Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976) 9. This quote by Rustin refers to the communist influence in America and not Africa.

His shift away from communism is described in this way by Anthony, “In 1948 however, ostensibly disillusioned by the onset of the Cold War, Yergan abandoned leftist activism in favor of ultra-conservatism.”¹⁰⁴ Yergan himself writes of communism in 1955:

When, therefore, we speak of the Communist threat in Africa, let us be clear as to what we are discussing. We are talking about an international organization, a hard-core apparatus of dedicated, often efficient, unscrupulous men and women who may be surrounded by followers often unaware of the real nature of their leadership. We are talking about a new phenomenon in international relations.¹⁰⁵

This quotation clearly indicates that whatever tie Yergan had with communism as a movement had been broken by this time.

Following Yergan’s affair with communism, he apparently made another radical ideological shift to ultra-conservatism, which he maintained until his death in 1975. However, his overall objective never changed: to obtain racial equality for all people of African descent.

Yergan’s change of political ideology did not change the fact that in his earlier life he was a pioneer of African American missions to East Africa. He set the direction for the development of the YMCA in East Africa during WWI. When he applied to return to East Africa, his rejection dashed the hopes of many African

¹⁰⁴ Anthony, ‘Max Yergan in South Africa,’ 27. Yergan’s personal library was left to his alma mater Shaw University, Raleigh, NC. A list of the books he left is available at the school’s main library and is noteworthy for the number of novels and the volumes on political science. Some of Yergan’s letters and documents are also available in the YMCA archive, University of Minnesota, St Paul, the Phelps-Stokes Fund files at the Schomburg Center of the New York City Public Library and the International YMCA Archives in Geneva.

¹⁰⁵ Yergan, ‘The Communist Threat in Africa,’ 263. See also ‘The Strange American Policy,’ by Yergan in *Reader’s Digest*, November 1961.

Americans for a reconnection with East Africa. While he served in South Africa he represented the hopes of many African Americans that opportunities for missions in Africa might one day be expanded.¹⁰⁶

By the time he left South Africa in 1936 the door to colonial Africa was firmly shut to African American missionaries. However, many African American mission agencies chose to push more widely open another door by sponsoring Africans to come to the USA for education in preparation for their missionary careers in Africa. Two outstanding Africans in this pattern were Daniel Sharpe Malekebu and Ernest Balintuma Kalibala who will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 185 in chapter 3. Kenneth King states that J.E.K. Aggrey used Max Yergan as an example when encouraging African American students to consider missionary careers in Africa.

CHAPTER VI

THE WAY FORWARD FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONS

In 1929 J. E. East, corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (NBCFMB), gave this summary of his mission, “We are maintaining fifty-seven missionaries in Africa, four home on furlough with four additional ones under appointment....Of our total number of missionaries, seventeen are American born. The remaining number are native Africans; six were trained in this country, and one in Europe.”¹ The figures in this quotation indicate that the NBCFMB missionaries were 70% African and 30% African American. This predominance of African missionaries sponsored by this mission was partially due to the color bar on African American missionaries to colonial Africa.

It could be argued that since colonial governments were not opposed to African missionaries who worked under the supervision of European missionaries that this ban on African American missionaries was not a color bar, but a political bar. The British colonial office certainly had concerns about the political implications to their colonies of Marcus Garvey and Ethiopianism. However, when the growth of European missions in Kenya during this period is contrasted with the absence of African American missionaries the presence of a color bar can not be overlooked. It was probably a combination of race, politics, economics, and neurosis that caused colonial officials to fear the reconnection between East Africans and African Americans. Regardless of the reasons for their exclusion, the fact is that the

¹ J.E. East, ‘Colored Baptist Missions,’ in *Crisis*, vol. 36, no. 11, November 1929, 372.

British colonial government in Kenya used race to reject the visa applications of African American missionaries.

Even before the color bar was firmly in place, African American missions saw the development of African leadership as the best way to sustain their work in East Africa.² The institution of the color bar system simply encouraged these missions to speed up the process in order to thrive. W.E.B. DuBois made this assessment of the African American missionary situation in 1929:

Out of 158 African missionaries, the Protestant Episcopal Church has 1 American Negro; the Presbyterian, 2 out of 88; the Northern Baptist, 1 out of 20; the Methodist Episcopal church 5 out of 91; the American Board, 4 out of 97....Of 793 other missionaries to Africa sent out by American missionary societies, including the United Presbyterians, the United Missionary Society, the United Brethren, the African Inland Mission, the Friends,...there is not a single American Negro.³

It may be concluded from this editorial that if African Americans wanted to go to Africa as missionaries, during this time, they generally had to go with African American mission agencies to Liberia. However, this did not prevent these mission agencies from supporting African missionaries. Like a river that upon reaching a dam seeks another way forward, so African American missions, blocked by colonial bans, focused themselves on supporting African missionaries.

² For examples of early African missionaries, see Jean Farrant, *Mashonaland Martyr - Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). Mizeki was a missionary with the Anglican Church in Cape Town to Mashonaland in presentday Zimbabwe in 1891. He was martyred in the Mashona rising in 1896. Another African missionary martyred shortly after Mizeki was Molimile Molele. See Lilian Knight-Bruce, *The Cowley Evangelist*, (Oxford: SSJE, 1896), 285. Finally, see the work on William Koyi and the Lovedale evangelists by T. Jack Thompson, *True Love and Roots*, (Chilema: Christian Communications Programme, 1989).

³ W.E.B. DuBois, 'The Missionaries,' in *Crisis*, vol. 36, May 1929, 167,168. DuBois states, 'On the other hand, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is frank: 'Our policy is not to send American Negroes as missionaries.'" p. 168. DuBois uses the term 'African Missionaries' in this quote to refer to missionaries sent from America to Africa.

This final chapter will investigate two outstanding examples of African missionaries who were both supported by the NBCFMB. They were Daniel Sharpe Malekebu in Nyasaland and Ernest Balintuma Kalibala in Uganda. This phase of African American missions involved them in helping Africans to study in the USA in preparation for their return to Africa as missionaries.⁴

This way forward had begun years earlier according to historian George Shepperson who states, “It was to be the connexion between the Negro churches of America and Africa which, after the Civil War, was to provide a channel for increasing numbers of Africans to gain an education in coloured American schools and colleges.”⁵ Although Shepperson called this a ‘connexion’ rather than a reconnection, to some degree both words are descriptive of what happened. It was a connection in that African American churches reached out to Africans with an offer of educational assistance. On the other hand the motivation behind their offer, in part, came from a desire for a reconnection with their ancestral heritage in Africa.

In addition, this section will evaluate the relationship between these missionaries and their mission board, the NBCFMB. Did these missionaries fulfill the expectations of this mission? They were not just replacements for African American missionaries, but they developed their missions in unique ways that were sometimes beyond what the NBCFMB expected. Their interaction with this mission

⁴ At the retirement of Louis G. Jordan in 1921 after 25 years as secretary of the NBCFMB he was recognized for having helped to bring to the USA more than two hundred students from Africa and other lands. Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptists and the Foreign Mission Board*, (Kansas City: The Central Seminary Press, 1953), 132.

⁵ George Shepperson, “Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism,” *Journal of African History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1960, 302.

was traditional in the sense that they corresponded and received salaries. However, it will be shown that their perspectives on African cultures were sometimes quite different from African American missionaries and they sometimes had difficulty retiring from their missionary responsibilities after years of service. They raised issues about things like moratorium, the termination of western missionary involvement in Africa, long before it was seriously considered in the 1970s. As they struggled to develop their missions they sometimes left the “beaten path,” left by African American missionaries. They were authorized by the NBCFMB to adjust what they had learned through their education in the USA to fit the situation in Africa as they saw it. The NBCFMB was most interested in the growth of the churches at their mission stations so this chapter will evaluate how these African missionaries contributed to this goal.

Finally the issue of their religio-political involvement in their countries struggles for independence will be evaluated.⁶ Although their mission board did not encourage them to get involved in political activities they found ways to contribute to the cause. Their contributions will be evaluated in light of the directives of their mission.

⁶ The word ‘religio-political’ was taken from George Shepperson’s description of his meeting in 1959 with African American missionary Landon Cheek in, ‘America through Africa and Asia,’ in *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1980, 62. Shepperson says of this meeting, ‘The Reverend Cheek taught me much about Afro-American religio-political relations with black Africa-and about our common humanity.’

Daniel Sharpe Malekebu was born in Nyasaland about 1890. He attended a school sponsored by the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), Chiradzulu, Nyasaland. He was one of the early converts of African American missionary Emma Delaney, who baptized him in 1902. While working as a servant in Delaney's home he taught her to speak Yao while she taught him English. When Delaney left for furlough in the USA in 1905, Malekebu, at the age of about 16, followed her by first walking to the Indian ocean, and then working his way on board ships to England and New York City. Upon arrival at Ellis Island, New York, he was detained by the Immigration Office for five days. He was finally picked up by a representative of the National Baptist Convention, which was the sponsor of the PIM in Nyasaland, who helped him get in touch with Delaney. She and the NBCFMB helped him enroll in a number of historically African American schools the first of which was Selma University, Selma, Alabama. After completing the course there he went on to North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina and then to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee where in 1917 at about the age of 27 he earned his M.D.

Malekebu also attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago where he received training in practical ministry. Following his graduation from Meharry he did further study in tropical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.⁷ His educational

⁷ This early history of Malekebu's life was compiled from Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach: Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, 1987), 21-26, and John Parratt, 'The Malikebu Case,'

accomplishments confirmed that he was an exceptionally bright student who only needed education and opportunity to reach his potential. The NBCFMB recognized his gifts and helped him develop them in USA schools in preparation for his return to his home country as a missionary.

In 1919 he married Flora Ethelwyn, who was born in the Congo and brought to the USA by missionaries as an infant. She was raised in Atlanta and was known as the 'The Spelman baby,' because she was cared for by African American missionary to Liberia, Clara Howard. Howard brought her to Spelman College when she returned to the USA. Mrs. Malekebu, like Delaney, was a graduate of Spelman College.⁸

After sixteen years of study in the USA, Malekebu tried to re-enter Nyasaland. An editorial in the *Mission Herald* explains what happened, "Dr. Malekebu attempted to go back in 1921, but was forcibly sent out of the country when it was understood he was going as a missionary."⁹ The British colonial government rejected Malekebu's request to re-enter Nyasaland in spite of the fact that no negative information on him could be found in the colonial records. A memo written by a colonial investigator in 1921 confirms this:

We have never found out why the Colonial authorities are so suspicious of this man [Malekebu]. Unless the U.S. Dept. of Justice knows of him we shall not in any case obtain any details of value about his political activities (if any)

in *Exploring New Religious Movements*, eds. A.F. Walls and Wilbert Shenk (Elkhart: Mission Focus, 1990), 119. Malekebu generally spelled his name with an 'e' rather than an 'i'.

⁸ Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach (Florida)): Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, 1987), 27.

⁹ Editorial, "The Nyasaland Mission Station again on the map," *Mission Herald* (hereafter cited as *MH*), vol. 29, no. 10, November 1926, 5. In another editorial, *MH*, January-February 1963, 12, Malekebu states of his motivation for ministry, 'The preaching of the Gospel has been the greatest job of my life. I have walked many days in going from place to place...Many souls were converted.'

since the schools he attended are for Negroes only and would therefore be in sympathy with him.¹⁰

It was Malekebu's potential political influence that concerned the colonial office most. His application for entry to Nyasaland arrived at a time when Marcus Garvey's movement was becoming more active. Also his desire to reopen the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) six years after the Chilembwe rising probably made the colonial administrators even more wary of him. His education in African American schools as a medical doctor may have made them wonder if his very presence might encourage other Africans to desire a similar education. They might have been concerned about the dissatisfaction among the people of Nyasaland that contact with Malekebu with might have created. This was also the motivation for the exclusion of African American missionaries from Kenya. Governor Northey of Kenya was concerned that Max Yergan represented a 'calibre of Negro' who should be kept out of the Kenya colony, so Malekebu may have fitted the same description.¹¹

While waiting for five years to enter Nyasaland, the Malekebus worked as missionaries with the NBCFMB in Liberia. Finally in 1926 they received permission to reopen the PIM. According to historian Robert Rotberg:

In the next year (1926), after consistently refusing to do so since 1920, the government of Nyasaland reluctantly allowed adherents of Chilembwe's church, the Providence Industrial Mission, openly to worship together and to revive the use of their corporate name. This action coincided with and was influenced by the return to Nyasaland of the Rev. Dr. Daniel Sharpe

¹⁰ Colonial Office Memo, PRO 371/5688/8300 July 27, 1921. While Malekebu was attending Meharry Medical College, John Chilembwe led his uprising at the PIM in Nyasaland in 1915. This occurred ten years after Malekebu had left Nyasaland.

¹¹ See chapter 4 footnote 152 which states, 'Sir Edward Northey directs me to inform you that he does not consider it advisable, to introduce into East Africa negroes of a different calibre from those to be found in East Africa itself, and he therefore would be glad if Mr. Max Yergan were not appointed for work among the native races.'

Malekebu, a Yao from Chiradzulu who had originally accompanied Emma B. Delany to the United States in 1908.¹²

Rotberg is incorrect on the year he gives for Delaney's departure from Nyasaland. She actually left in 1905. However, he is correct on the year he gives for the reopening of the PIM. While waiting for its reopening, the faithful members of the PIM met secretly, "worshipping God in the bushes, refusing to accept any other shepherd."¹³ The return of Malekebu to Nyasaland helped sustain the faithful who were looking for the New Jerusalem to be rebuilt.¹⁴ J. East, editor of the *Mission Herald*, wrote of Malekebu in 1926 shortly after returning from the Le Zoute conference:

Again we sent him back and he reached his home at the beginning of this year. The question of opening the station had been taken up with the governor. Three native men wrote that they had taken their lives in their own hands, gone to the governor and petitioned him to allow them to open the mission station. When Rev. Malekebu reached the scene at the beginning of the present year, he found he was not allowed to fully open the work. Upon receiving our letters the governor made inquiries about the Board and Secretary. Impressed with the information he received, he allowed the station to be opened. Rev. Dr. Malekebu, who is an ordained minister, as well as a medical doctor, and his good wife, who was born on the West Coast of Africa, but was educated in this country at Spellman [sic]University, began work. The results of their endeavors for the first six months are wonderful. More than two hundred and eighty have been baptized and there is a membership so soon of nearly seven hundred. Many of the members who had been in hiding far and near are worshipping the Lord with great joy....They need funds to rebuild the church and mission home....We have in Nyasaland an open door and a ripe harvest field. May we go to the rescue.¹⁵

¹² Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 148-149, 187.

¹³ Editorial, *MH*, Vol. 29, no. 10, November 1926, 5.

¹⁴ The New Jerusalem was the name of the PIM's rebuilt church. It was taken from a prophecy in the book of Revelations 21: 2, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

¹⁵ Editorial, *MH*, Vol. 29, no. 10, November 1926, 6.

The PIM had functioned underground for 11 years and now was given permission to worship openly. Malekebu's initial success may have been a result of years of ministry that had been occurring in the bush by African ministers of the PIM. To some degree the reopening of the PIM by Malekebu and his immediate success was a vindication of the NBCFMB's previous investment in this work. The USA member churches of the NBCFMB shared the joy the PIM found in regaining its freedom to worship. According to the final sentence in this statement by East, the NBCFMB's was confident in renewing its call to its member churches to contribute their finances to help rebuild the PIM.

When Malekebu was sent to re-opened the PIM, he was given strict instructions by the NBCFMB to avoid any involvement in politics. This mission was aware of the British colonial government's sensitivity to the political influences of African American missionaries. This sensitivity may be seen in both the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Chilembwe uprising in 1915 and in the Branches' description of the Zulu uprising in Natal in 1906.¹⁶ As a result of the Chilembwe uprising the PIM was destroyed by colonial officials and subsequently closed until 1926.¹⁷ However, during the next half century under Malekebu's leadership the PIM

¹⁶ Chapter 4 footnote 30 reports the Commission on the Chilembwe rising finding, "The only kind of literature which seems to have affected the movement apart from Joseph Booth's petition of May 1914 sent for circulation, and to some extent circulated, among Nyasaland natives, was in our opinion a class of American negro publications imported by Chilembwe the tendency of which was to inflame racial feelings." See also chapter 3 footnote 160, where Branch states, "But I cannot tell how it will be, on account of the native uprising in Natal. This dreadful unrest is said to be due to the teaching of the Afro-American missionaries, under the name of the Ethiopian movement—'Africa for the African.'"

¹⁷ Interview with William J. Harvey III, corresponding secretary of the NBCFMB, 8 November 1996.

saw phenomenal growth in its schools, churches and medical facilities. It was stated by Willie Mae Ashley, the biographer of Emma Delaney, about Malekebu:

His complete record shows that he established many churches and schools in Malawi, Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Malawi) [sic], Portuguese East Africa, and the Union of South Africa. He constructed two hospitals at Providence Industrial Mission; organized the Malawi Farmers Association, the Chiradzula District Association, and the National Baptist Assembly of Africa, Inc., the most powerful Christian body in Africa with over 200,000 members.¹⁸

It is unclear how much of the growth of the PIM was due to the financial support that missionaries like Cheek and Delaney raised in the USA, but it was probably a co-operative building effort. For many years Malekebu led the PIM in expanding its programs, being careful to stay out of politics as much as possible. However, this policy eventually led him and the PIM into conflict with soon to be president of Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

In 1962, shortly before Malawi independence was declared, Banda wrote to Malekebu sharply criticizing him for the PIM's lack of support in Malawi's political struggle for independence. Banda wrote the following:

To be frank with you, I was bitterly disappointed with you. Because the first I heard about you is when I was a boy in South Africa, about 1924. You had been refused to return home for political reasons, because you had been sent to America by John Chilembwe or you had been recommended by him.

¹⁸ Willie Mae Hardy Ashley, *Far From Home*, (Fernandina Beach: Willie Mae Ashley, 1987), 21-26. Malekebu's statement in this book is included here, "I was converted and baptized by Mother Delaney in March 1902. She changed my name to Daniel Sharpe which was her father's name....Now, she left to come to the States. Now, I was anxious to come with her to the States to go to school. I think you could call it a vision. I wanted to come to the U.S., get my schooling and go back home and teach people....I didn't have a physical birthdate - I didn't know how to figure it out and in as much as I was in this country people asked how old are you? I say, I don't know. They said, well some one said he looks like he is about 16, from what we can see. So I put it that in 1905 I was 16 so I go back there and I took baptism date and spiritual and natural birthdate and add. Yes, so that's the way it was.' A list of Malekebu's awards and accomplishments may be found in chapter 4 of Ashley's book. When he retired he went to the USA which was the home of his wife Flora. However, when she died in 1977 he returned to Malawi.

With this history behind you, I expected you to be a nationalist. And all the time I was at Meharry, where you were yourself, I looked forward to the time when we could work together as nationalists among our people. And it was in this spirit that I received you in London and came to see you at Cumberland Hotel.

But to my bitter disappointment, when I returned home in 1958, you never showed interest in what I was doing, when everyone else did. But even worse than that, you even opposed me or opposed my work in your own area Chiradzuru. You prohibited members of your church from joining my Party, the Malawi Congress Party. And those of your members who had courage to join my Party, you expelled them. At least that is what I have been told.

All this shocked me. Nationalism in this country is associated with the name of John Chilembwe and Chiradzuru. And therefore, for a man like your self who as a successor to John Chilembwe in his own church and in his own area to do things contrary to John Chilembwe, was a thing I could not understand.¹⁹

Banda concludes this letter by writing, "I have nothing against you personally. I am saying all this simply to show you how bitterly disappointed I was with you that you did not tread the path that Chilembwe trod with courage, honor and dignity."²⁰

Banda may have been threatened by Malekebu who had been returned to Nyasaland long before himself. In 1924 when Banda was just a boy, Malekebu had already finished medical school and was seeking to return to his country. Banda apparently interpreted Malekebu's lack of political involvement as the act of a potential competitor. His displeasure with what he saw as the PIM's lack of commitment to the freedom struggle may have been based, in part, on his fear of Malekebu. However, Malekebu's lack of political involvement was a direct result of his taking a literal interpretation of the NBCFMB instructions in 1926 to stay out of all political

¹⁹ Banda to Malekebu, 20 October 1962, Providence Industrial Mission Archive, Chiradzulu, Malawi.

²⁰ Ibid.

affairs. These reasons went back over 45 years to the destruction of the PIM in 1915. For whatever reason, it appears that Banda's feelings towards Malekebu and the PIM were not cordial at that time. Malekebu's response, although respectful of Banda's position, indicates that his feelings towards Banda were not favorable either.

Malekebu wrote to Banda from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he was on furlough. His response was lengthy and explained the history of the PIM and his own personal experience with it. He wrote:

To give full reply to your letter to me, I shall have to give a bit of history of myself. Providence Industrial Mission opened in 1900 by late Rev. John Chilembwe, in 1901, he asked for help from Foreign Mission Board U.S.A. to send teachers who would assist him in teaching his people.

Two American teachers one man and a woman arrived in 1902. As I was already one of the earlier first students on the mission, for some reason, the lady missionary singled me out of a number of students there were to be her house boy as it was custom in those days.

It was not long before I was converted and baptised [sic]. In 1905 my teacher Miss E. B. DeLany by name, left Africa for U.S.A. but, during the above period, I had a vision of going to America, of which I heard so much talk about, to be educated as Minister, teacher and doctor of medicine, to return to Africa and build a church, school and hospital to help my people...²¹

Malekebu makes clear the connection between the PIM and its African American sponsor the NBCFMB back in 1901. He also points out that he was one of the first students of the station's school. John Chilembwe may have even been the first missionary to share the gospel with him. He makes clear that although the African American missionary Delaney baptized him it was his own 'vision' which led him to

²¹ Malekebu to Banda, 27 December 1962, Providence Industrial Mission archive, Chiradzulu, Malawi.

follow her to the USA for education. This vision to help his people eventually led him to return to Nyasaland to help build the PIM there.

He goes on to comment on his struggle to get to the USA, find his sponsor and get a medical degree, all of which were things that Banda probably experienced to some degree in his pursuit of his own MD degree.²² However, he never really explains why he and the PIM did not play a more direct role in the struggle for independence which was Banda's primary complaint. Instead, Malekebu appealed to the record of the PIM's involvement in the struggle for independence since 1901.²³

Malekebu goes on to write of his difficulties in gaining entry to Malawi:

On our arrival there [Port Herald], my wife and I, were taken from the boat as there were no trains at that time. We were detained here, an officer asked for all my papers, certificates and diplomas from institutions I attended.

These were taken by special officer to Zomba. After some days, we were told we could not enter. It was told us by those in the know that I would be another John Chilembwe.

My wife and I proceeded for South Africa. Staying in Capetown [sic](9) nine months until our Board told us to go [to] Liberia, West Africa....In Liberia we were placed at Ricks Institute, a school for many years had been in need of some one to lead it. Remembering my vision of many years ago I presented my case to the colonial office through the Aborigines, Proctive [sic] Society of London, with the question; why should I be denied to enter the land of my birth to help my people "what did I do?"

In 1925 I received word, there was nothing to keep me from entering Nyasaland. I went back to the United States following my wife who had

²² According to Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism*, 187. 'In 1922 Banda became a member of the American-run African Methodist Episcopal Church....Bishop W.T. Vernon of the African Methodists sponsored Banda's journey to New York in 1925.' It is said that Banda preached in many AME Churches in the USA to help pay his way through medical school at Meharry in Nashville, Tennessee.

²³ Malekebu to Banda 27 December 1962, PIM. Malekebu states, 'On our arrival in Nyasaland after few weeks on September 4, 1953 our mission was raided early in the morning about 5 A.M. the five roads leading to Providence Industrial Mission were closed in by soldiers with their machine guns ready to blow up our church. All soldiers were white who came from as far as East London, So.[uth] Africa, who were sent for the purpose of destroying the mission. Only by the power of God, it was not done.' p. 2, 3

proceeded me there. In the latter part of 1925 the Foreign Mission Board sent us back to Nyasaland, arriving there on February 3, 1926, and were not permitted to reopen the Mission until June 3, 1926.²⁴

Malekebu defends his record of suffering for Malawi's freedom by referring to his and the PIM's early contributions to the struggle. He demonstrates that as a well educated African returning to his home country, he presented difficulties for the colonial government and to some degree he was a pioneer among the people. He concludes his historical review with this statement, "I am writing this to show that in my line, the road has not been as rosy as people might think; but I have been going on."²⁵

Malekebu goes on to defend himself against Banda's accusation that he excommunicated members of the PIM who joined the Malawi Congress Party. He states, "Many of our members joined some of the parties. None were turned out of our church because they did this."²⁶ Although no one was turned out because of their political persuasion, apparently none were encouraged to participate either. Banda appears to have been correct in his criticism that the PIM had not been actively involved in the struggle for independence. However, this can be understood in terms of the PIM's history and the role that John Chilembwe played as a proto-nationalist in Malawi's struggle for independence.

²⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

²⁶ Ibid.

The relationship between the PIM and the NBCFMB continues today.

However, it must be noted that the vast growth of the PIM was probably due more to African evangelists and preachers than to African American sponsored missionaries. None the less, Malekebu's record of service to the PIM was exemplary by any measure. Although few ministers were able to study in the USA the way Malekebu did, they were most certainly exposed to African American literature from the NBCFMB and the influence of Malekebu who was, to a significant degree, a product of the reconnection of African American missions and Africa. Having said that Malekebu's ministry was a success, it must be noted that a sequence of events occurred after his retirement in which he attempted to retake the leadership of the PIM cast a negative shadow on an otherwise successful career. This led to a legal battle in the Malawi courts between Malekebu and the NBCFMB. The courts found in favor of the NBCFMB and control was passed to Malekebu's replacement Rev. Muocha.²⁷ Malekebu died at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital Blantyre, Malawi, on October 8, 1978 and is buried in the village of Ntupanyama, his birthplace.²⁸

Ernest Balintuma Kalibala

²⁷ For an analysis of this court case see John Parratt, "The Malekebu Case," in *Exploring New Religious Movements*, editors A.F. Walls and Wilbert Shenk, (Elkhart: Mission Focus, 1990), 119-125.

²⁸ According to William Harvey, secretary of the NBCFMB, the mission hopes to one day honor Malekebu's work for Malawi and his mission by building a memorial at his resting place. For further study see Malekebu's article 'African Life and Customs Before The Europeans Found Them,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 3, July-August 1940, 10-11.

As in the case of Malekebu, Ernest Balintuma Kalibala came into contact with missionaries at a early age. The following section will look at his educational development and growth as a missionary. Kalibala wrote in the preface of his PhD dissertation:

I was born July 9, 1901 at Kampala, Uganda, British East Africa and was the fourth of eleven children - six girls and five boys. My father is Paulo Balintuma, my mother Lakeri Tusinzomu. My grandfather, who died in 1912, was Isaya Busiriba and my grandmother, who died in 1927, was Damali Banjagala. I am a member of the grasshopper clan. My father, until fifteen years ago, when he retired from active political life, was a chief of the City of Kampala; he also was the Kanyonyi or the Chief of the King's market places. In these two positions he had the opportunity of meeting the King and the Chiefs.²⁹

Having grown up in a privileged background, it is likely that Kalibala also met the King and the Chiefs with his father for they were to play key roles in the future development of his educational mission in Uganda. The Ensenene or Grasshopper clan was one of the more prestigious clans of Buganda.³⁰ In his early years Kalibala attended a day school of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Kampala. From 1910 to 1918, he attended a boarding school, the Mengo High School, which was also a CMS sponsored institution. From 1918-1921 he attended Kings School, Budo, another CMS sponsored school. From 1921 to 1924 he was a teacher at Mengo High School. Having received all his formal education in CMS sponsored schools and then teaching in one, it would appear that Kalibala was a prime candidate to continue his teaching career in the CMS education scheme.

²⁹ Ernest Kalibala, Harvard University, PhD dissertation, "The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe of East Africa," 1946. See "The Sources of Information" section following the "acknowledgements"

³⁰ Correspondence with Kevin Ward, 15 October 1997.

However, in 1924 he was profoundly impressed by J.E.K. Aggrey who was in East Africa with the Phelps-Stokes Commission. He was also motivated to study in America by reading *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee.³¹ As a result of these two events, Kalibala decided to go to the USA for education. His foreign study was sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund and his family.³² He began these studies in England where he spent a few months at Trent College in Derbyshire and then studied for three months at Kingsmead College, Selly Oak, in Birmingham. In the spring of 1925 Kalibala came to the United States and spent the next year at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Following this he went to a secondary school called Lincoln Academy at King's Mountain, North Carolina (an American Missionary School), where he graduated at the age of 25. Kalibala then went to New York City where he attended the City College of New York and later transferred to New York University where he earned a BS in education in 1932. In February 1933 he matriculated at Teachers' College, Columbia University, from which he received his MA in education and where he was also accepted into the doctoral program. He eventually transferred to Harvard University and completed his PhD in sociology in 1946.³³

³¹ In the acknowledgements section of his dissertation Kalibala states, "...to Booker T. Washington's great book *Up From Slavery*, which inspired me to want to study in American schools,"

³² *Ibid.*, Kalibala also expressed his thanks, '...to Dr. Thomas J. Jones, Educational Director of the Phelps Stokes Fund, whose generous assistance helped me to graduate with my Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from New York University.' The Phelps Stokes Fund was a philanthropic organization created to help people of African descent obtain education.

³³ Harvard University Library Archive confirmed on 7 November 1996 that Kalibala received his PhD in 1946. An additional copy of his dissertation is on microfiche at the Schomburg Center of the New York City Public Library. His dissertation is entitled, 'The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe of East Africa.'

In December 1933, Kalibala married Miss Alta W. Jones, an African American from Brooklyn, New York. Her father was a retired Baptist minister in Brooklyn. Mrs. Kalibala was a graduate of Boston University where she majored in Religious Education. She then spent six months studying elementary education at Columbia University before her marriage.

In the spring of 1934, the Kalibalas returned to Uganda where they began the Aggrey Memorial School.³⁴ According to a document on the school's history:

The institution started in 1932 (as a nursery school at the home of the late Kawalya-Kaggwa, Kikandwa Mengo) by the late Mrs. Alta Jones Kalibala, an American who was married to the late Dr. Ernest B. Kalibala, the first Ugandan to hold a University degree. Later in 1933 the school moved to Sunamwaya village where the late Prince Suna had given a gift of 30 acres of land for providing a permanent location for the exclusive purpose of training of the sons and daughters of Uganda.³⁵

In 1934 Kalibala applied for and obtained a job with the CMS as an education officer.³⁶ His application caused difficulties for the CMS in that he demanded, but the mission refused to pay him, an equal salary with the European missionaries. After a few months in this position he resigned and devoted his full attention to developing the Aggrey Memorial School with his wife.³⁷ In an historical document

³⁴ This early history of the Kalibalas was compiled from an Editorial, "The Foreign Mission Board takes over a new station in Uganda, East Africa," *MH*, vol. 43, no. 1, January-February 1940, 12-13.

³⁵ Document entitled "Historical Background in Brief," n.p., [1994], available through the Aggrey Memorial School archive, Kampala, Uganda. This quote gives the date of 1932 as the beginning of Aggrey Memorial, however the Kalibala's did not arrive in Uganda until 1934. This nursery school may have been functioning before they arrived and then they developed it.

³⁶ "The staff of the [Ugandan] Mission consisted, besides the Bishop and Mrs. Stuart, of 16 foreign clergymen, 11 laymen, including 5 doctors, 16 missionaries' wives, and 43 other women missionaries; one of the women is a doctor, and 11 are trained nurses, working in connexion with the medical missions." *Annual Report of the Committee of the Church Missionary Society*, London: CMS, (1935), xxxi.

³⁷ "Historical Background in Brief,"

concerning the school it was said that, “Aggrey Memorial school has no religious foundation body. It was the first independent school. However, it allows freedom of worship for the various religious groups.”³⁸

The departure of Kalibala from the CMS was a partial rejection of its paternalism towards him. Considering his long association with the CMS as a student and teacher, his departure must have been quite a blow to this mission. Its disappointment seems to have implied that having invested in him, to become what Kenneth King called a ‘Good African,’ or one who knew how to co-operate within the colonial context, they now had the right to dictate his direction.³⁹ It seemed to have been puzzled about why Kalibala did not like being paid a lower salary than his European counterpart and probably saw his starting of an independent school, in competition with their own, as the epitome of ingratitude for all that it had done for him. By their attitude they presumed to know more about the needs of Africans than the Africans themselves. This paternalistic attitude was one of the main sources of Ethiopianism, or the founding of independent organizations like the Aggrey Memorial School.

King explains Kalibala’s situation further:

There was a paradox in his resignation, however: for the Uganda mission[CMS]believed Jones answerable for Kalibala’s theories. There had been, they alleged, a close correspondence between Jones’s educational

³⁸ Correspondence with Richard Semakula, teacher at Aggrey Memorial School in Kampala, Uganda, 6 June 1997. Aggrey currently has 613 students and is a government funded A Level Secondary School.

³⁹ Kenneth King, ‘African Students in Negro American Colleges: Notes on the **Good African**’ *Phylon* vol. 31, no. 1, 1970, 16-30.

maxims and the words which Kalibala had used to justify his severance from the mission.⁴⁰

Kalibala used phrases like “working with Africans, rather than for them,” and “education for life,” in ways that implied independence from mission control. This was almost the opposite of the way Jones, who was paternalistic in his approach, used these same phrases.⁴¹ King goes on to state:

Indeed, a study in the history of these and other educational ambiguities from Booker Washington through Moton, to Aggrey and Jones, would reveal how many of these leaders’ slogans and stories were *double entendres*, some deliberately so, some unintentionally, with the interpretation depending on the colour or politics of the audience.⁴²

In an article Kalibala wrote for *Mission Herald*, he used the same phrase often used by Jones, “working with the Africans.” Kalibala gave this recommendation for the African American missions:

In the same trend there are several customs, habits, and philosophies in African culture that should not only be preserved, but actually included in the Christian philosophies. In this way the Bible will be readjusted to suit the needs of the people of Africa.... Briefly, the contention is that if Africa as an unknown quantity will be reversed into a known quantity, this is the time

⁴⁰ Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 243.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 265. Jones states in a letter, in 1935, entitled, ‘To an Able and Devoted African whose Studies Filled him with Perplexity and Disappointment when he Returned Home,’ reprinted in the appendix of King’s book, ‘My study of schools in Africa and other parts of the world is that independent schools begun by individuals are not successful. There are in America a very few exceptions, notably Tuskegee. In Africa, the successful exceptions are practically negligible. By all means, attach yourself to the Government school system or to one of the well-organised missions.’

⁴² King, *Pan-Africanism*, 243. King states, ‘The most famous of them all was Booker Washington’s, which greeted each visitor to Tuskegee who passed his statue; it appealed to conservative South African missionaries as much as to West African intellectuals.’ The statement on Washington’s statue reads as follows, ‘We shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify labour and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life. There is no defence or security except in the highest intelligence and development of all.’ See Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 267. An example of a *double entendre* would be the sermon on Moses delivering the Children of Israel out of Egypt, which was often preached during slavery in the USA. It could be seen by slavemasters as a harmless Bible story but to the slave it was also understood as a hope for actual deliverance from slavery, a message most slaveholders would probably not have agreed with.

when the slogan, 'to work for the Africans,' should be reversed into 'to work with the Africans.'⁴³

Although Kalibala used the same phrase as Jones he meant something very different from what Jones did. Jones would hardly have agreed with the founding of an independent African school like Aggrey as the application of this principal.

Liberian educator Edward Blyden, an advocate of African American emigration to Africa, summarizes this paternalistic view of education:

It is difficult to get our philanthropic friends to understand that as a rule, the training they have been giving to the Negro with the very best intention is not the best for him....They honestly give us their best and wonder that their best does not produce the best results; but their best on their line is not as good as our best on our line.⁴⁴

As the Kalibalas worked at developing their school it became obvious that they needed an infusion of finances in order to survive. According to its history, "students had to pay fees in cash, foodstuffs, cattle, etc. The Kalibalas had to put up sheds with their own hands carrying building materials on their heads."⁴⁵ They finally decided to seek support from the USA. "Through financial difficulties and much opposition from the ruling British for putting up a private school, the Kalibalas

⁴³ Ernest B. Kalibala, 'Africa—The Unknown Quantity', *MH*, vol. 44, no. 3, July-August 1940, 11. King wrote finally, 'The particular paradox of Kalibala's resignation was that he named his independent school 'the Aggrey Memorial School', thus identifying himself with that side of Aggrey that appeared in the famous 'eagle' parable, with its apparently unambiguous incitement to independence.' King, *Pan-Africanism*, 243.

⁴⁴ Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1971), 179. Blyden states in the same letter, 'From our standpoint, we do not believe that Africa needed the theological interference of Romans, Celt and Teuton, which have modified the Semitic ideas promulgated in the Bible. European Christianity is Western Christian - that is to say, Christianity as taught at Nazareth, in Jerusalem, and on the Mount of Beatitudes, modified to suit the European mind or idiosyncrasies.' p. 178

⁴⁵ Document entitled "Historical Background in Brief. n.p., [1994], available at the Aggrey Memorial School archive, Kampala, Uganda.

were forced to return to America to request for financial assistance. It appears they did not get it. So the school closed within a few years of its founding.”⁴⁶ Even though the school closed for a few years, during this period of world wide depression, this did not stop the Kalibalas from continuing their struggle for its existence.⁴⁷ Kalibala was aware of the long struggle for freedom that African Americans were in the process of fighting and he seemed to be persuaded that a similar struggle was what Africans needed to wage to overcome their own oppression. He states:

At the time when Negroes were accepted in the Christian churches in America, they were pushed into galleries. They resented it and established their own organizations. At least the Negro churches have become the basic foundation of the American Negro development. The problem of debasing and segregating African names, culture and the like has led many Africans in several parts of Africa to want to start their own churches that will respect their ideas of life.⁴⁸

The founding of Aggrey Memorial school was but one of the many attempts by Africans to break away from the control that western missions had on education in Africa. The Kalibalas decided to join the NBCFMB which took them on as missionaries in 1940 and enabled them to return to the Aggrey Memorial School. This announcement, printed in the *Mission Herald*, entitled, “The Foreign Mission Board Takes Over a New Station in Uganda, East Africa” states:

In spite of the depression and the effects of the present war, the Foreign Mission Board is not only refusing to retrench, but has adopted a policy of expansion. The station comprises 200 acres of land, a five-teacher school,

⁴⁶ Article from the 50th anniversary brochure of Aggrey Memorial school p. 10 published 11 October 1986 author unknown, available from the school archive.

⁴⁷ This depression began with the 1929 stock market crash and lasted until the beginning of WWII.

⁴⁸ Ernest Kalibala, “Africa - The Unknown Quantity,” *MH*, vol. 44, no. 2 May-June 1940, 12

and unlimited possibilities for educational and religious development. Mr. Ernest B. Kalibala, the principal of the school, is a native of Uganda who has been trained in some of the best schools in America.

Even though he was employed by an African American mission board, Kalibala stated that not all African American mission agencies were sensitive to African culture. He wrote, "This is regrettable in that several Negro Missionary Societies have not seen eye to eye with Africans to help them maintain their social ideals."⁴⁹ It is unclear exactly which agencies Kalibala is referring to. However, it was the practice of many African American missionaries to change the names of their baptismal candidates as in the case of Emma Delaney who gave Daniel Sharpe Malekebu her father's name at his baptism.⁵⁰ In this regard, these missionaries followed a western pattern of evangelization and therefore Kalibala's complaint against some practices by these missionaries was probably valid.

Kalibala goes on to make a radical proposal about the best way forward for African American missions in 1940. He suggests, "...the time has come when the Foreign Mission Boards should reduce the number of missionaries sent abroad and, instead, put on a program of bringing the Africans into American schools, educate them and send them back to Africa....an educated Christian African could serve the country better than five ill-prepared missionaries."⁵¹ Ironically, the idea of an

⁴⁹ Ernest B. Kalibala, 'Africa—The Unknown Quantity,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 2, May-June 1940, 11. Since Kalibala's dissertation at Harvard University was in sociology it follows that he would choose a mission to work with that shared his views of sensitivity to the social culture of his people. However this did not guarantee that all African Americans were perceived as being culturally sensitive.

⁵⁰ See footnote 17 above.

⁵¹ Ernest B. Kalibala, 'Africa—The Unknown Quantity,' *MH*, vol. 44, no. 3, July-August 1940, 11. This was the second article in a series of two that Kalibala wrote for this magazine. Kalibala was

educated African being more effective than a western missionary was also promoted at the Le Zoute conference. However, the difference was that Kalibala was not interested in waiting another century for equality to be given. Although he recommended a partial moratorium of Africa American missionaries in 1940, he was apparently not opposed to African American resources being used to educate African missionaries.⁵² Certainly the idea of training gifted Africans as mission leaders had worked in his case, because he was educated in two of the finest schools in America, Columbia and Harvard Universities. Although he may not have fulfilled the expectations of the CMS and the Phelps Stokes Fund, he represented the way forward for African American mission agencies like the NBCFMB.

Kalibala was well qualified to incorporate the gospel into Ugandan culture. Having grown up in Uganda and having done a serious study of his own culture, he knew its needs better than the western missionaries. Like Malekebu, Kalibala was a gifted student who only needed an education and opportunity to reach his potential. These were the very things that the NBCFMB was willing to help with. He summed up his view on cultural issues in this statement, “Many missionaries spend their entire missionary career in Africa—from three to five years—trying to enlarge the African brain to the size of a civilized man, converting the Africans to denominational creeds rather than the teaching of Christ.”⁵³ Just as former slave,

recommending a limited moratorium on foreign missionaries to Africa 30 years before the idea resurfaced in the 1970s.

⁵² Kenyan Rev. John Gatu, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, proposed a partial moratorium of western missionaries to Africa at a meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1974.

⁵³ Ernest B. Kalibala, ‘Africa—The Unknown Quantity’ in *MH*, vol. 44, no. 2, May-June 1940, 11. Kalibala may have been specifically referring to the Church Missionary Society in this quote as he

Frederick Douglass, was able to make the distinction between indoctrination in religious creeds and the true teachings of Christ, so did Kalibala.⁵⁴ He also made a close connection between religious creeds and western denominationalism. Kalibala was quick to add that, “American Negro missionaries do not concur in the conclusion meted out against the African brain.”⁵⁵ He goes on to state that many people, even missionaries who had lived in Africa, were misled by propaganda about Africa. He described it as six blind men, each touching different parts of an elephant, arguing over what it really was. Their final conclusion was that the elephant was to each individual, “an unknown quantity.”⁵⁶

Kalibala went on to work for the United Nations Organization as an Africa research specialist from August 1946 to December 1952.⁵⁷ In 1954 the Lukiiko, the Kabaka’s royal assembly, invited Kalibala along with African American Ralph Bunche to join the Hancock Commission.⁵⁸ The purpose of the Commission, as designed by the British colonial government, was to address constitutional questions that would lead to Ugandan independence. However, a key issue brought to the table

came into conflict with them over lower salaries paid to its African employees for doing the same work. This is according to email discussions with Kevin Ward, University of Leeds, 20 October 1997.

⁵⁴ Frederick Douglass made this distinction between the Christianity of Christ and what he called, ‘slaveholding religion.’ See his quote in Chapter 1, footnote 11.

⁵⁵ Kalibala. ‘Unknown Quantity,’ 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷ Kalibala’s employment with the UNO was confirmed in a letter, 27 July 1998, to the author from Marilla Guptil of the UNO Archives and Records Management Section. The letter states, “Please note that because the main thrust of Mr. Kalibala’s functions entailed drafting duties, there appear to be no archival holdings relating to his work in the United Nations.

⁵⁸ D. Anthony Low and R. Cranford Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900-1955*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 336, 337.

was the return of the Kabaka, exiled from Uganda since 1953. Although the colonial governor of Uganda, Andrew Cohen, wanted to replace Kalibala and Bunche on the Commission with Ugandan chiefs, he only succeeded in replacing Bunche.⁵⁹ It was thought by the Uganda colonial government that as an 'American Muganda' Kalibala might not have been as easily controlled as chiefs from Uganda.⁶⁰

The examples of Malekebu and Kalibala are but two African missionaries in a field that is only beginning to be historically analyzed. Further research may well reveal that the African contribution to the evangelization of Africa had a greater impact than all the western missionaries to Africa combined. Due to the colonial color bars, African missionaries played an important role in the sustainability of African American missions in Africa. They also helped to maintain the reconnection between East Africa and African Americans began by pioneer African American missionaries. Both Malekebu and Kalibala married African Americans which helped

⁵⁹ Paulo Kavuma, the Katikkiro, or chief minister in the Lukiiko wrote of Kalibala and the Hancock Commission, *Crisis in Buganda, 1953-1955*, (London: Rex Collings Ltd., 'The next step was for the Lukiiko to elect representatives to take part in discussions with Sir Keith [Hancock]. Those chosen were,... Dr. E. B. Kalibala, a Muganda who was at that time in American....These names were sent to the Governor for confirmation. He was not pleased with the list, saying that it was inappropriate to include the name of Dr. Bunche, who was not a Muganda, and Dr. Kalibala, who was out of the country. The Lukiiko agreed to replace Dr. Bunche by Mr. Joseph Musoke, the ssaza chief of Buyaga, but they were not willing to withdraw their support for Dr. Kalibala....' p. 74 Kavuma goes on to state, 'The committee had certainly worked hard and they had worked with great secrecy. It seems that the one man who was not a success was Dr. Kalibala. Several members of the committee complained to me that he was of no use to them and that he talked to all sorts of people about the private discussions which were taking place and let them know where he had disagreed with the other members of the committee. Those who complained to me said that they now agreed with Sir Andrew Cohen's wish to veto Dr. Kalibala's membership of the committee....' p. 81, 82

⁶⁰ Low, *Buganda and British Overrule*, 245. It is possible that Kalibala became an American citizen while living in the USA. However, this phrase 'American Muganda' was probably used in a negative sense by the colonial government to indicated that Kalibala had taken on western ways to the exclusion of his Buganda cultural background. Kalibala had no doubt been affected by his years of residency and education in the USA.

maintain this connection.⁶¹ They also had close ties with the USA through their studies and work. Kalibala may have even become a citizen of the USA and was known as the 'American Muganda,' by the colonial government. Their correspondence to the NBCFMB was used to keep the African American community informed about the connected with East Africa.

In terms of whether they fulfilled the goals of the NBCFMB, it must first be acknowledged that these two missionaries took two different approaches to their mission work. Malekebu helped restart and expand a church based mission. Kalibala restarted and tried to expand an independent, religiously neutral school. In terms of the long-term results, Malekebu's ministry was a huge success numerically and in terms of sustainability. Kalibala failed to build either a church or school. Most of the credit for the growth of Aggrey Memorial School must be given to his colleagues who sustained it through difficult days and built it into what it is today. As a missionary with the NBCFMB Kalibala accomplished little in terms of sustained or expanded growth of the Church in Uganda.

In terms of their religio-political involvement in the struggle for independence of their respective countries, Kalibala seems to have made a significant contribution. He served on the Hancock Commission at the request of the Lukiiko at an important moment in his country's struggle for independence. On the other hand, Malekebu avoided all political involvement and was criticized by president Banda for his lack of support at a crucial moment in his country's history. Eventhough he was

⁶¹ Flora Malekebu was born in the Congo but adopted and raised from infancy in Atlanta by African American missionary Clara Howard. Most likely she felt that the USA was the only home she knew and this is where she and her husband returned to retire after 50 years in Malawi.

following the direction of his mission, to avoid political involvement, he seems to have taken the NBCFMB's guidance to the extreme.

These missionaries as well as many others African missionaries represented the way forward for African American missions in 1926. They experienced varying degrees of success in their work, but no one can doubt that compared with African Americans who generally stayed in East Africa for relatively short periods of time, these missionaries were the ones who accomplished the most in terms of sustainable development. African American missionaries were catalysts of the ethnic reconnection between East Africans and African Americans. As a result of this reconnection many East Africans have come to the USA for education and training in African American and other schools and have returned to greatly benefit their home communities. The African American community also benefited from the reconnection in terms of identity and selfhood. Being aware of people around the world caused this community to develop a more global view of its struggle for equality in America. Where the reconnection leads now is up to the respective communities. However, since the colonial bans are no longer an excuse and the needs of Africa and African Americans are so great, it would appear that it is time for another outpouring of African and African American mission activity to strengthen the reconnection and benefit both communities in their Christian development.

In spite of their small numbers and the comparative shortness of their service in Africa, African American missionaries to East Africa had an influence both at home and abroad that was much greater than their numerical strength might indicate.

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