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AUSTRALIAN MISSIONS AND AFRICA:
SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Introduction

This is my first year as a member of the African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific and my first conference of the association. Therefore as none of you will know me I should introduce myself. My name is David Turnbull and I am currently doing a Master of Arts degree through the Department of World Religions at Victoria University of Wellington. My research area is "Australian missionary involvement in Nigeria from 1960 to 1990". I have been interested in Africa for many years. This interest was further enhanced by a three month trip to central Nigeria several years ago.

Religion in Africa is very strong. It is a key aspect of life there. One of the major religions is Christianity. It is estimated by some scholars like Patrick Johnstone (1986, 45) that Christians in Africa comprise 50% or more of the population. Thus Christian Africans are a valid and important image of Africa, especially south of the Sahara.

Christianity has been in Africa for over 1900 years in various forms and in varying degrees of strength. The real growth of Christianity in Africa has taken place since 1800 as a result of the mass influx of Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries, especially from Europe and America. Australians should be included as well. However, from the point of view of general missions literature, including histories, worldwide missions statistical analyses such as the 1925 World Missionary Atlas and the World Christian handbooks, it would appear as if Australians were non-existent in Africa.

This has not been the case at all. Some results from my current research so far support this conclusion and I would like to present these in a paper entitled "Australian Missions and Africa: Some Preliminary Findings".

Significance of this Paper

This paper has additional significance on this occasion for several reasons.

The first reason is that this conference coincides with a special anniversary in the history of Australia and Africa relations. It is 100 years since the first known Australian missionaries went to Africa. Joseph Booth, his daughter, Emily, and Edward Mangin arrived in Nyasaland on the 11 August, 1992. It would appear that there were some Australians who went to Africa independently prior to this but there is no concrete evidence available to support this.

Secondly, 1992 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the modern Protestant missionary movement which commenced in 1892 when William Carey founded the Baptist Missionary Society. Australia's involvement in Africa has comprised a small segment of this worldwide movement and one of the longest involvements of the Australian missionary enterprise.

Thirdly, January, 1993 marks the centenary of the first Australian missionary society, Church Missionary Society (CMS), in Africa. Their first missionaries, the Doultons, went to Tanganyika.

Sources

The material has been collected from a range of sources. The traditional sources include the histories of international missionary societies and Australian missionary societies, biographies, societal periodicals, worldwide missionary statistical publications and journal articles. In addition, I have conducted a survey, as part of my thesis research, amongst the Australian missionary societies who work in Africa concerning their history, details on missionaries, finances and archival facilities.

The Beginnings

Joseph Booth is the first known Australian missionary in Africa. He received his call in Melbourne but he was not Australian born and had only limited contact with the country. He was born in Derby in 1851, left England at the age of 29, spent 6 years in New Zealand where his two children were born and lived in Melbourne for only about five years. He went to Nyasaland in 1892 as the first missionary of the newly British formed Zambesi Industrial Mission. His contacts with Australia after this appears to have been non-existent because he focused on Great Britain and the United States for his financial and emotional support. Much has been written on his involvement and experiences in Africa. The two main works are "Joseph Booth, Prophet of Radical Change in Central and South Africa, 1891-1915" by Harry W Langworthy in the Journal of Religion in Africa (1986), and Independent African, John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915 by G. Shepperson and T. Price (1958).

It would mean that Booth's companion Edward Mangin is the first known Australian born missionary in Africa. He lived in Melbourne and was a member of the North Brighton Baptist Church. It was there that he met Joseph Booth. Little is known of him as he died of malaria within a year of arrival.

The remainder of the 1890's saw mainly individuals go to Africa but also saw some denominational societies such as CMS in 1893 and the Australian Baptists being involved in the Nyasa Industrial Mission before giving

responsibility to the British Baptists in 1896.

Thus began the Australian missionary involvement which has been one of the most important and one of the longest components of Australia and Africa relations. For pragmatic reasons, rather than give a detailed history of this involvement by society, I will provide a overview of this involvement.

Societies

There have been 26 Protestant missionary societies and no fewer than 5 Catholic missionary/religious organizations involved in Africa.

Seventeen of these Protestant societies are interdenominational, some of them have a distinctive African focus. The denominational societies have focused in on the Pacific and Asia regions as they are neighbours to Australia. The Catholic involvement in Africa did not really develop until the 1960's.

Also apart from some of the denominational societies, all of the societies are involved in international societies, mostly from Britain. The number of societies with British origins is 12. This relationship takes two major forms. There are only 2 uniquely Australian societies, Mobile Missionary Maintenance (MMM) and Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS), involved in Africa which suggests that the impetus for the involvement in Africa had to originate overseas because of the lack of direct contact with Africa. The structure of these relationships can take one of two forms. The first is that the Australian body is independent but has loose, friendly and co-operative relations with its original body like CMS or Sudan United Mission (SUM). The second is that the Australian body is part of an international council and is subservient to the international organization like Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) or Christian National Evangelism Council (CNEC).

Doctrinally, the vast majority of the Protestant societies classify themselves as evangelical. This influences their perceptions of the task at hand and of Africans.

The major societies in Africa started in Australia in the early half of this century, for example, CMS in 1893, SUM in 1912, SIM in 1927 and Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) in 1928. Many of the smaller societies started much later.

The biggest societies, CMS and SIM, have averaged over 40 missionaries in Africa per year since 1960. They have sent a total number of over 350 people to Africa. There has also been a group of societies who have averaged over 20 per year during most of this period which includes SUM,

WEC, CMML, AIM, SA and ABMS. (See appendix 1)

Only one society has terminated its involvement in Africa. Unevangelized Field Mission (UFM) did so in 1964 after one of its missionaries, Laurel McCallum, was martyred by the Congo rebels in 1964. They also felt that the involvement was becoming too expensive.

Personnel

Personnel numbers are not readily available. There have been approximately 1500 to 2000 Australian missionaries in Africa. The peak was in the 1970's but the numbers have remained constant since then.

The missionary force in Africa has averaged about 10% of the total Australian force throughout the last fifty years. It is only in the 1960's that the missionary force in Africa has really began to grow and an interest in Africa really developed. Prior to this, not surprisingly, Australians focused mainly on the Pacific and Asia because they were their nearest neighbours.

Why was there this increase in missionary numbers in Africa in the 1950's? Numerous reasons exist for this. The vast improvements in the transportation of missionaries to Africa. The growth of missionary interest within the Church in Australia. The traditional fields still required missionaries but not the degree to which they were previously, due to the fact that the local church had been planted and established. This meant that new fields were needed and Africa was a logical area. The growth of nationalism and independence in Africa in the 1950's and 1960's helped to give the Continent greater worldwide exposure.

Numerous Australian missionaries have served in Africa for more than 25 years. The longest serving include Bishop Langford Smith of CMS - 44 years in Tanganyika, Mr Bakewell of CMS - 43 years in Tanganyika, Effie Varley of SIM - 42 years in Nigeria and Alex Fellows of SIM who spent 42 years in Ethiopia,

The overall average length of service of Australian missionaries in Africa is hard to determine. Yet it was quite substantial, as revealed in the average length of service for the CMS missionaries still serving in Africa in the 1970's and 1980's, with a figure about 10 years. The approximate average length of service for SUM in Nigeria is 4.5 years with 57% of missionaries since 1970 serving for less than 3 years. The approximate average length of service for SIM in Nigeria is 3.9 years with 70% of their recent missionaries serving for less than 3 years.

Women dominate the Australian missionary force in Africa. The figures for some of the larger mission societies support this. Of the CMS

missionaries in Africa, over 60% were women. Over 55% of the SIM missionaries and over 50% of the SUM missionaries in Nigerian were women.

The majority of Australian missionaries came from the eastern side of Australian. Not surprising considering the size of population that is settled there.

Some missionaries took international leadership of African missionary societies, they include Mr Norman Thomas who was the General Secretary of Africa Inland Mission in the 1970's, Bishop Stanway who was the Bishop of Central Tanganyika from 1951-1971, and Andrew Macintosh who is currently the Director for Africa with The Leprosy Mission International.

Life has not been easy for missionaries in Africa. Disease has claimed some lives. Also some Australian missionaries have died in Africa during service by accident such as Mr Keith Beasley (WEC International) (NL 10/3/77, 1) in Ghana, and Sigfried Raeker (New Tribes Mission) in Senegal in 1972 or by being martyred such as Laurel McCallum of UFM in the Congo in 1965.

So where did the missionaries go?

Geography

The first known contact with each of the regions is as follows

Southern Africa was where the first known contact was made by Joseph Booth in 1892 when he reached Nyasaland.

East Africa was next when Archdeacon Doulton and his wife from NSW arrived in Tanzania with CMS in 1893. (Cole, 1971, 322)

North Africa was reached early by Dr E Pain who went to the Old Cairo Hospital with CMS in 1902. He had relinquished his position of Superintendent of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to become a missionary. (Cole, 1971, 319) He died from cerebro-spinal meningitis which he contracted from an Egyptian patient in 1913.

West Africa, despite being called the "White Man's Grave", was reached early when C.T. Williams arrived in 1911 in Nigeria with the British Branch of SUM. He lived in Ibi, the headquarters of the mission, Donga and Wukari. His primary responsibility was maintenance and construction. Under his direction the Wukari Training Institute was established.

The Horn of Africa became a focus of outreach when Rev K E Hamilton of the CMS arrived at Yambio in southern Sudan in 1911. He was responsible for establishing the station, teaching young boys for 2 1/2 hours a day and managing a dispensary. He resigned after only three years because of ill health. This was just before the arrival of the ANZ Branch of SUM who were to commence a work in the Nuba Mountains in 1914.

Central Africa was the last region contacted and it was rather late. This was when Harold and Alice Williams went to the Congo in 1927. Little is known at this stage of their involvement there.

It is not possible to give a historical account of the involvement in each region. Since these initial contacts, what has been the distribution of Australian missionaries in each part of Africa? This is best seen in analysing several of the major Australian statistical surveys. These have been spasmodic since world war 2. The National Missionary Council of Australia survey of 1945 is incomplete. A copy of a 1959 survey has yet to be located. The best surveys have been the 1967 survey conducted by the Division of Mission of the Australian Council of Churches, 1973 survey edited by David Barrett in the "World Christian Encyclopedia", the 1983 survey conducted by the Australian Eavangelical Alliance, and the 1990 survey by Patrick Johstone.

(See appendix 2)

East Africa has been the major area of focus for various factors. The closeness to Australia facilitated easy transportation for missionaries. However, the major reason is that the Australian CMS had primary responsibility for Tanganyika, especially since 1927, which included the provision of personnel.

The main thrust of contact has been with former British colonies, due to the fact that Australians have had close ties with the British societies, also they were countries where English could be spoken easily. (See appendix 3)

So what was the motivation of the missionaries for going to these places and for being involved in such ministries?

Motivation

This is very hard to ascertain and greater indepth study is required of all the missionaries. The motivation of the Australia missionaries in going to Nigeria is an example. In this group it would appear that spiritual factors within a person, such as the obedience to God's Word and call to mission, provided the main source of motivation. This area needs to be explored further.

So what were the missionaries involved in when in Africa?

Ministries

The dominant ministries Australians fulfilled in Africa are again not easy to determine. The relevant data is hard to ascertain from existing records and so some of it still needs to be collected. There are several case studies available to provide some leads.

As evangelism has been the primary purpose of the missionary societies operating in Africa, societies have explored and used various ways to achieve their purpose. However, in recent years there has been a move from direct evangelism to support of national churches. This has caused a change in the role of the missionaries in Africa

The short term nature of much of the involvement is very obvious, especially in the last three decades. The focus has been on specific projects which on completion the personnel return home. This is in stark contrast to the early Australian missionaries in Africa who made it a lifelong career. Miss Effie Varley of SIM made Nigeria her home and died peacefully there, after arriving there in 1923. This recent change is seen in the major societies operating in Africa like WEC, SIM, SUM and CMS.

Industrial missions was one of the early strategies used by Australian missionaries. Joseph Booth was a strong advocate of this concept.

Medical work is quite prominent in each of the major missions. SUM in Nigeria has had over 35% of its personnel in medical ministries and SIM in Nigeria has approximately 49%. CMS has had 22% of its workers in medical work. The major reason for this is that the meeting of the physical needs is viewed as being important in evangelism and in meeting the spiritual needs.

Another area of strength in meeting the physical needs of Africans is in the area of education. CMS has had approximately 25% of its personnel involved in the provision of education and SUM in Nigeria has had about 15%. Education has been a strong strategy of missionary societies and it is reflected in these figures.

Within these societies, Australians have been involved in small numbers in administration, church work, printing, agricultural programs, maintenance, children's work and literature development.

Issues

Australians have, overall, benefitted from their contact with Africa, have generally been well treated and have had good relationships with

Africans. This is seen in comments in response to the societies' survey question on the highlights of working in Africa such as it "broadens and enriches our overseas mission program", and "being brought close to African countries and practical fellowship with thousands of churches". However there have been some difficulties in working in Africa which the societies acknowledge. I will highlight two of them.

Political - Booth was expelled from Nyasaland in 1902 and never returned. G. Hollis went to Nyasaland in 1906 to set up a Churches of Christ mission but he was deported from the Protectorate in 1915 on charges of foreknowledge of the Chilembwe Rising. The eviction of societies from countries has also occurred. The granting of visas to particular countries has not been easy at times.

Partnership with the national churches - This has been a constant theme in the past twenty years, and has brought its difficulties. Several missions have highlighted the difficulty of communication and working with nationals.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of the Australians in Africa is still to be studied and ascertained. However it would appear that most were able to contribute to the Church and its growth in Africa. This paper has just provided a brief overview. There is much more scope for further study and research in this area. There is still so much detail within this that needs to be ascertained. One such area is a bibliography on Australian missions in Africa.

So Australians have been part of the missionary force that has been sweeping through Africa, and have battled on despite the difficulties and obstacles. Their presence should now be acknowledged.

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APPENDIX 1

TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSIONARIES PER SOCIETYBY THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

	<u>1945</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1990</u>
<u>BRITISH</u>				
CMS	61	99	64	57
SUM	26	18	20	17
SA	--	15	27	--
WEC	--	22	25	42
CMML	--	28	23	13
SAGM/AEF	--	3	16	20
OTHER	2	13	1	5
<u>AUSTRALIAN</u>				
ABMS	--	--	23	28
<u>NORTH AMERICAN</u>				
SIM	--	68	45	41
AIM	--	9	17	29
WYCLIFFE	--	--	2	12
OTHER	--	1	3	3
<u>ROMAN CATHOLIC</u>	--	10	--	--
<u>OTHER</u>	--	--	49	--
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>286</u>	<u>315</u>	<u>267</u>

APPENDIX 2

TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSIONARIESBY REGION

	<u>1945</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1990</u>
EAST AFRICA	59	114	127	94	88
WEST AFRICA	--	48	68	83	90
NORTH AFRICA	2	--	--	1	2
HORN OF AFRICA	26	65	69	26	17
CENTRAL AFRICA	2	44	15	14	10
SOUTHERN AFRICA	--	11	52	85	58
ISLANDS	--	4	5	12	2
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>286</u>	<u>336</u>	<u>315</u>	<u>267</u>

APPENDIX 3

TOTAL NUMBER OF AUSTRALIAN MISSIONARIESBY FORMER COLONIAL POWER

	<u>1945</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1983</u>
BRITISH	89	155	228	243
FRENCH	--	62	46	60
USA	--	3	2	2
ITALIAN	--	47	52	10
PORTUGUESE	--	1	--	--
OTHER	--	18	8	--
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>286</u>	<u>336</u>	<u>315</u>

